

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND

**Ideologies of Blackness and the translation of Black African
literature in Maoist China: A paratextual exploration**

By

Byron B. Sherman

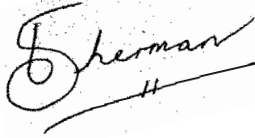
**A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in African Literature**

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I declare that this is my own unaided work. It is in the fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Humanities at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted for any other degree or examination or to any other university.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sherman" with a stylized flourish underneath.

Byron Boaz Sherman

Date: 10 December 2021

For my beloved mother

Anne Sherman

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Abstract

In the present study, I sketch a translation history of Black literatures in China prior to 1966, and propose that the paratexts to these works may be excavated for insights into the role of Blackness and Africa in the Chinese imaginary and how it impacted the presentation and translation of Black literatures. I show how factors such as the emergent racialized Chinese world view in the early twentieth century, indignation at the treatment of China and its people at home and abroad, conceptions of literary modernism and oppressed people's literatures during the May Fourth era in the 1920s, the development of a left-wing politics in the literary establishment during the 1930s, Soviet-oriented translation policies and anti-US ideologies in the early 1950s, as well as the emphasis on anti-colonialism and Third World solidarity in the early 1960s, impacted the translation and paratextual framings of diasporic Black, and subsequently, Black African literatures. The project reveals a high degree of consistency in the themes grappled with in paratextual presentations across the decades but highlights how changing political priorities in particular could instigate discursive shifts. The project also highlights how the individual agency of marginal actors in the Chinese literary sphere (in the early period) and Black African writers (in the Maoist era) could also lead to translation activity. Ultimately, the project foregrounds the overwhelming determinism of *non-literary* factors in the translation of Black literatures until the 1960s, when there is some evidence of an aesthetic appreciation of the works of Ousmane Sembène.

A note on the use of Chinese, translated titles and the capitalization of ‘Black’

The present study is based on a large corpus of primary Chinese-language sources that are not accessible in digitized form online and generally not widely available outside of the People’s Republic of China (PRC). In the interests of academic integrity and transparency, all translations from these sources include the original Chinese text in the relevant footnote. It must be noted that, due to a quirk in the Microsoft *Word* program, each Chinese character is counted as a separate word. Over twelve thousand characters have been used in this dissertation and the total number of words is thus greatly inflated. I have used simplified Chinese characters throughout, although some of the original sources make use of traditional characters and others a mixture of traditional and simplified. I also make use of *pinyin*, the standard romanization system in the PRC. All translations from Chinese into English are my own unless otherwise indicated.

This dissertation refers to the titles of Chinese works, Chinese translations of works with a known original title, and Chinese translations of works with an unknown original title. Where a recognized English title is supplied in the original publication, I indicate this by italicizing and capitalizing the words of the title. Where the Chinese translation provides an English translation of the Chinese title of a non-English work for which the original title is unknown, I indicate this by using double quotation marks. I also do this in cases where a foreign writer’s work has been published as an original Chinese publication (such as when Chinese publishers have published Chinese-language anthologies of unpublished foreign poetry). Where original titles are available, they are italicized and capitalized as is standard practice. In cases where I have translated the title into English myself, it appears in ordinary Roman font in the footnotes and bibliography and in single quotation marks in brackets in the body of the dissertation.

I have chosen to capitalize ‘Black’ throughout this dissertation, in keeping with recent trends in academia and journalism. This is in recognition of its status as a signifier of a racial or cultural identity and not merely a colour. However, in the case of quotations, I have followed the capitalization protocols of the scholar in question. In certain sections, the outdated and offensive word ‘Negro’ has also been retained for translations from periods in which it was in common use.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	ii
Abstract	iii
A note on the use of Chinese, translated titles and the capitalization of 'Black'	iv
Introduction	1
Part 1: The pre-Qing to the late Republican period up to 1936	
<i>Chapter 1:</i> The Black slave topos: A marker of pre-Mao literary and socio-historical constructions of Blackness and Africa	32
<i>Chapter 2:</i> Abject trajectories: Black literature and the Black modern in the Republican era	89
Part 2: The early to middle years of the Maoist period (1949–1965)	
<i>Chapter 3:</i> From <i>The Path of Thunder</i> to <i>Mine Boy</i> : The paratextual presentation of Peter Abrahams's works in communist China (1952–1959)	156
<i>Chapter 4:</i> On the road to Tashkent: The Chinese literary establishment's reluctant embrace of Black African literature (1953–1958)	208
<i>Chapter 5:</i> In praise of "the <i>real</i> Black Africa": Presenting African literature to Chinese readers during and after the Afro-Asian Writers' Conference in Tashkent (1958–1965)	247
Conclusion	303
Bibliography	308

Introduction

I. ‘In the shadow of the Black slave’: a vignette

In 1982, Lijiang Press (‘Lijiang chubanshe’) published a new Chinese vernacular version of one of the most translated foreign novels in the history of China: Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852).¹ The first translation of the novel in 1901 was also the first-ever full-length rendering of an American novel in Chinese. As chapters one and two of the present work will reveal, it had an unprecedented impact on Chinese society, spawning not only other translations but also theatrical versions, children’s books and even comics. Yet, it was not entirely Stowe’s original story that had struck such a chord; instead, its first translators, Lin Shu and Wei Yi, framed the text with a “Translator’s Note” that connected the plight of the Black slaves in the US to that of Chinese labourers working abroad. They also intervened extensively in the translation itself in order to make it serve their political agenda of provoking indignation at the treatment of Chinese people and spurring the reading audience to take action. In their version of the story, the title character recedes into the background and the novel’s religious sentiments are muted. Despite its anti-slavery message, the novel becomes complicit in reinforcing the image of

¹ Qi, *Western Literature in China and the Translation of a Nation*, 139.

Blackness that was taking root in the discourses of Lin Shu's massively influential Qing reformer peers, who were turning to evolutionary discourses and Social Darwinism to explain the desperate situation that China found itself in internationally and domestically at the end of the nineteenth century.

Yinghong Cheng suggests that Blackness became an intrinsic part of the new world view in which a global racial category was created that largely ignored ethnic or geographic differences and was contrasted unfavourably with the global white and 'yellow' or Chinese categories.² The Black or 'Black slave' category was constructed as racially inferior to the Chinese on the basis of anthropological and pseudoscientific theories. This inferiority "facilitated the Social Darwinist discourse of national survival" politically as Blacks were the "hopeless losers" in the struggle between the races and their imagined fate was construed as essential for China to avoid. Cheng argues that these abject discourses of Blackness have remained largely unchanged into the present. I will return to these issues below and throughout the present study.

In light of the above, I suggest that the paratexts that serve to introduce and contextualize the Lijiang Press translation may be seen as sites in which these discourses continue to be negotiated. In the present study, I establish a way of reading such paratexts against the backdrop of the institutionalization (and

² Cheng, *Discourses of Race and Rising China*, 180–81.

fossilization) of a particular view of Blackness in China. According to such a reading, the paratexts to this translation may be shown to be drawing on a well-established but largely negative cultural understanding of Blackness. By using the same title as the Lin Shu/Wei Yi translation, the editor/translator invites educated readers to connect the new version with that celebrated translation. Hu Wenye's introduction reinforces this link by referring to Lin Shu in its very first sentence and evoking the late Qing/early Republican era.³ The title itself is the site of one of the first displacements enacted by the original translators. Instead of translating the title directly (as some later translations did), Lin Shu and Wei Yi called their translation *Heinu yu tian lu* or "The black slave cries out to heaven", thereby replacing the figure of Uncle Tom with the impersonal collective image of Black slaves bewailing their predicament.⁴ The Lijiang Press edition, translated by Zhang Peijun, therefore re-enacts this displacement, reviving an image that is at best tangentially related to the actual plot of the novel or its characters. The original translation thus becomes an alternative point of reference to the source text, particularly for those who were familiar with it, while readers approaching the text for the first time gain a view of the text that is strongly mediated by the connotations of Blackness and slavery, and the connection between the two, in the Chinese imaginary.

³ Hu, 'Zhu baihua xinyi quanben *Heinu yu tian lu*' 祝白话新译全本《黑奴吁天录》出版 [Celebrating the new and complete vernacular translation of *Heinu yu tian lu*], 1.

⁴ I have used Baker's translation of the title. See Baker, 'Translated Images of the Foreign in the Early Works of Lin Shu (1852-1924) and Pearl S. Buck (1892-1973): Accommodation and Appropriation', 95.

More striking still is the selection of cover image (see figure 1). In this racialized framework, Zhang Daping's artwork evokes a wide range of negative connotations that had served to buttress Chinese notions of superiority over Black people. This image reinforces the impersonal and collective associations of the title rather than referring to actual characters or events in the novel itself. The stooped, naked figure evokes the humiliation of chattel slavery and the suffering it inflicted as well as the supposed savage, bestial nature of Blacks. The figure's isolation recalls the perceived inability of the Black slave 'race', spread across Africa and its diasporic regions, to be self-conscious national subjects and unite to defeat oppression. In this regard, it is not surprising that the summary on the inside flap of the front cover reiterates the apocryphal quotation, attributed to Abraham Lincoln, that Stowe's book had started the war that freed the slaves; Black agency in such an enterprise was thought to be impossible. The closed eyes, with their connotations of a lack of consciousness or prayer, are emblematic of a people who were supposedly narcotized by the religion of their white oppressors, an idea that incurred the scorn of generations of Chinese cultural mediators. No wonder Lin Shu and Wei Yi were successful in their attempt to provoke indignation by drawing parallels between the treatment of these people and that meted out to Chinese by foreigners.



Figure 1: Cover of the Lijiang Press translation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (photograph by author)

The influence of left-wing ideologies and the connections with the world beyond China that they enabled would introduce divergent notions of Blackness from the 1920s onwards but never fully dislodge this cluster of discourses that are analogous to what Cheng calls a living “fossil”, relatively unchanged over time but as viable in the China of the 1980s as they are today.⁵

⁵ Cheng, *Discourses of Race and Rising China*, 20.

My project suggests that, by the 1950s, an imaginative re-invention of both Blacks and Blackness in the minds of Chinese publics was necessary in order to legitimate the foreign policy objectives of the Chinese Communist Party and the cultural/political activities that these objectives impacted. Among these activities were efforts to translate Black African works for Chinese readers, a watershed moment in the history of cultural exchanges between China and Africa. In the present study, I am primarily concerned with situating this Maoist-era translation enterprise in the context of the racialized discursive legacy that I have adumbrated here. I offer a history of the translation of Black works prior to this era that highlights how these racialized discourses emerged and could suppress or enable translation activity, as well as how they were negotiated, often in response to the political priorities of the historical moment, through paratextual as well as other materials. I then contextualize the translation activities of the era in light of this history and the persistence of these discourses. Such a move exposes the discourses of anti-colonialism and Third World solidarity that characterize the period as being in tension with negative conceptions of Blackness and Africa that had often diverted Chinese cultural mediators and reading publics *away* from engagement with the continent, its people (including those of its diasporas) and its cultural products. The outbreak of the Cultural Revolution represents the natural endpoint of my discussion as all journals and magazines devoted to literary translations were shut down and no translations of foreign works of literature appeared between

1966 and 1971.⁶ Only thirty-four such works in total had been published by the end of this period in 1976. In addition, as I will show later in the present work, the translation of Black African literature was inextricably linked to China's involvement in the Afro-Asian Writers Bureau (AAWB) after 1958; this participation would also diminish in 1966 with the split between the Permanent Bureau of Afro-Asian Writers located in Cairo and AAWB in Beijing.⁷

II. Context and rationale

In recent years, the racialized character of contemporary Chinese society has attracted the attention of the media and a number of scholars.⁸ The discrimination suffered by Black residents of Guangzhou during the COVID-19 pandemic and the use of 'Blackface' in the Chinese Spring Festival variety show that is watched by millions are merely some of the latest episodes in a history of incidents stretching back to the late 1950s, a number of which are mentioned elsewhere in the present work.⁹ At the same time, it is well known that the late 1950s marked the beginning of a period of engagement with Africa that has shifted in character over the decades with the changing priorities of

⁶ Qi, *Western Literature in China and the Translation of a Nation*, 126.

⁷ Yoon, "'Our Forces Have Redoubled'", 234.

⁸ In addition to numerous works by Frank Dikötter, some of which will be cited in this thesis, see also Barry Sautman (1994, 1997), Sautman and Hairong Yan (2007, 2009, 2016), Yinghong Cheng (2011, 2019), Ian Law (2012), and M. Dujohn Johnson (2007).

⁹ See, for example, Wang, 'From Covid to Blackface on TV, China's Racism Problem Runs Deep'. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/02/18/covid-blackface-tv-chinas-racism-problem-runs-deep>, last accessed 1 November 2021

China's Party State and their African interlocutors. Noting that "Africa–China literary relations" have to date "received only cursory attention", Karen Thornber emphasizes that "literary engagement provides valuable perspectives on some of today's most controversial and anxiety producing transregional dynamics, and it brings to the fore numerous aspects of transnational and transregional engagements that might otherwise be obscured in global history discourse".¹⁰ While much has been written about the economic and political aspects of the relationship between Africa and China, this project thus foregrounds the less familiar *cultural* terrain. As mentioned above, the translation of African works occurred in the 1950s, during what were also the initial stages of the Sino-African relationship writ large. I ask whether understanding the nature of the engagement during that historical moment, in the specific domain of literary translation, can shed light on the forces at play in this relationship up to the present day as well as its hidden possibilities and barriers. With concerns that resonate with Thornber's emphasis on the neglected "human dimension" of this relationship in mind, I have sketched a history that is marked not only by race and ideological influences but also the initiatives of individual agents whose contributions deserve recognition and further critical attention.¹¹

¹⁰ Thornber, 'Breaking Discipline, Integrating Literature', 712.

¹¹ Thornber, 697.

The first wave of Third World translations in Maoist China has been considered in several recent studies, most of which do not distinguish meaningfully between Black African works and those of Latin America or Asia. To some extent, this lack of differentiation may be an outcome of China's own longstanding use of "yafeila" or "Asia–Africa–Latin America" in discussions of its "official foreign policy" towards these regions to this day, more recently "under the guise of Xi Jinping's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative".¹² Nicolai Volland locates the literatures of these regions in a largely undifferentiated translation "zone" of "Third World countries" during the early Maoist period while acknowledging that African works received attention somewhat later than the others.¹³ Similarly, Paola Iovene includes them under the rubric of "anticolonial literatures" without distinguishing clearly between their respective trajectories.¹⁴ The present project affirms Yinghong Cheng's assertion that "images of Africa and black people have been portrayed and constructed as a non-Chinese Other throughout history", often reflecting "China's own problems and desires", and thus proposes that viewing the translation of Black African literatures through this lens allows for a more nuanced account of 'Afro-Asian' cultural exchanges between China and Africa.¹⁵ In this respect, Shu-mei Shih's 2013 essay 'Race and Revolution: Blackness in China's Long Twentieth

¹² Vanhove, "A World to Win", 161.

¹³ Volland, *Socialist Cosmopolitanism*, 177–78.

¹⁴ Iovene, *Tales of Futures Past*, 66.

¹⁵ Cheng, *Discourses of Race and Rising China*, 231.

Century’, in which she situates the 1984 translation of Ferdinand Oyono’s novel *Une vie de boy* in the “post-socialist” context of the China of the 1980s by exploring the relation between the legacy of Mao’s “Third Worldism” and the longstanding but often repressed prejudice against Black Africans, served as an invaluable precedent for my approach in the present study.¹⁶ Shih’s account reveals the “anticolonial, revolutionary language” of the translation’s paratext to be “merely rhetorical” by the 1980s. Shih also investigates the language of the single translated text itself while my discussion strategically foregoes individual translations in favour of a large corpus of paratextual material that frames multiple works. However, my approach is similar in the sense that it situates the entire Black African translation enterprise of the Maoist era against the same racialized backdrop.

Lydia Liu and Duncan Yoon emphasize China’s contribution to the Afro-Asian Writers’ Bureau during this period and argue for an alternative conception of postcolonialism, based on horizontal vectors between Global South actors rather than between such actors and the colonial metropole. Invoking the Chinese translation of Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* (1958) in the translation journal *Shijie wenxue* as an example, Liu states that the work was exposed to Chinese readers long before it became known in the West and that “Achebe had

¹⁶ Shih, ‘Race and Revolution’, 157–61.

been recognized first as a distinguished Afro-Asian writer in China, Egypt, India, the Soviet Union, and other countries before he became a postcolonial Anglophone (African) writer”.¹⁷ Liu argues that this constitutes a different mode of recognition from that enacted in the West and locates it in “the forgotten history of post-Bandung Afro-Asian writers’ interactions and solidarity in 1958-1970”. Yoon highlights the influence of Maoist ideas on the initial platform of the Bureau and how these ideas were subsequently appropriated in the formulation of its own concept of postcolonialism.¹⁸

While my project does not contest these claims of an alternative ‘Afro-Asian’ concept of postcolonialism, it uncovers a striking unevenness in the Chinese coverage of Afro-Asian literatures across the 1950s. While the literatures of other Third World regions were translated from the early 1950s onwards with a further burst of activity after Bandung, Black African works were virtually ignored until the run-up to the Afro-Asian Writers’ Bureau Conference in Tashkent in late 1958. While Liu and Yoon both highlight the significance of this conference, they do not consider the relatively unique handling of Black African works before, during and even after this event. My project also offers a tentative hierarchy of Black African writers in the Chinese literary sphere

¹⁷ Liu, ‘The Eventfulness of Translation’, 162.

¹⁸ Yoon, “‘Our Forces Have Redoubled’”, 237–40.

during this brief period, based on numbers of individual translation publications as well as particular features of their paratextual presentations; in this framework, figures who would become prominent postcolonial figures in the Western academy such as Achebe or Senghor are noteworthy precisely because of the seeming lack of attention paid to them while other, less well-known writers seem to have garnered greater favour in many instances. While it is difficult to account for this, I speculate on an alternative ‘mode of recognition’ in which the translation of Black African writers’ works was at least partially contingent on the individual writer’s willingness to speak or write approvingly of China or the CCP, visit the country itself or interact with Chinese cultural mediators. These public gestures of recognition were then deployed in translation paratexts that carefully positioned Chinese reading publics vis-à-vis the Afro-Asian translation enterprise as a whole and the Black African writer in question. These factors appear to have been *internal* to the Chinese context and the extent to which they may be subsumed under the activities of the Bureau or explicated by notions of ‘Afro-Asian solidarity’ requires further investigation.

Finally, the present study is concerned with the *transmission* of Black African works in China and thus resonates with transnational approaches to African literature. While the discussion encompasses the early twentieth century in China, my main focus is the early Maoist era which was set against the

backdrop of the Cold War and the initial period of decolonization. I consider some of the implications of these broader geopolitical shifts in the domain of translation, one of the dominant modes of cultural exchange between Third World actors. In this respect, my work complements recent scholarship by Lahaie, Barnai and Bethlehem on the “hypertransmission” or the “intensive print circulation” of Peter Abrahams’s novel *The Path of Thunder* and its “adaptation across other media and genres of expressive culture” in the Soviet Union.¹⁹ In the pro-Soviet climate of the early PRC, the translation of Abrahams’s novel may be seen as an outcome of its mass transmission in the Soviet Union while its Chinese paratextual handling raises similar concerns to those identified in its ballet adaptation around the ‘erasure’ of various aspects of its provenance. Moreover, the introduction to a recent volume entitled *The Cultural Cold War and the Global South* foregrounds “the idiosyncratic and sometimes unpredictable encounters” as “Third World” writers and other agents “navigated the ideological and material constraints set out by superpowers and emerging or imagined regional powers”.²⁰ Chapter five of the present work also highlights the role of such encounters, such as those at the Afro-Asian Writers Bureau Conference in Tashkent and elsewhere, in the trajectories of African writers and their works in a China that aspired to leadership of the Third World.

¹⁹ Lahaie, Barnai, and Bethlehem, ‘Choreographing Ideology: On the Ballet Adaptation of Peter Abrahams’ *The Path of Thunder* in the Soviet Union’, 288.

²⁰ Bystrom, Popescu, and Zien, *The Cultural Cold War and the Global South*, 3.

III. Methodological considerations

While the present study may be of interest to scholars in the fields of translation studies and African literature, it is crucial to emphasize that the project foregrounds the *paratext* as a site of ideological mediation and proposes that investigating this site yields insights into the role of Blackness in the Chinese literary sphere and the broader Chinese imaginary. It then recruits these insights in contextualizing the trajectory of Black African works in China during the Maoist period. Paratexts include material that is “part of the book itself (titles, covers, blurbs, prefaces, illustrations) or a prolongation of the book that is placed outside it (such as advertisements and interviews)”.²¹ Gérard Genette, who first defined paratexts and conceptualized their role, calls the former *peritexts* and the latter *epitexts*. In the Chinese context, they are a uniquely valuable resource as they provide a discursive record of the ways in which a wide variety of both major and minor cultural agents (translators, editors, ideological functionaries), impacted by the shifting demands of their historical moments, sought to position works about and by Blacks for Chinese readerships across several decades. My project thus attempts to account for translation *activity* and uses paratexts to translations as a *heuristic* to shed light on the Chinese context, rather than analysing the translations themselves or discussing theories or literary criticism associated with their source texts. Drawing on a

²¹ Alvstad, ‘The Strategic Moves of Paratexts’, 78.

large corpus of peritextual and epitextual materials, as well as other types of commentary in some limited instances, I have been able to pursue a *diachronic* approach in this project, allowing me to gain an overview of trends in the paratextual representation of Blackness over key periods of modern Chinese history. This corpus comes from an extensive collection of translation journals, plays, novels, and anthologies of poetry and short stories, that was assembled through online purchases from second-hand bookshops throughout China. The process of tracking down pre-1966 Chinese translations of Black African and diasporic works, as well as items relevant to them in important journals, took several years.²²

In the field of research on paratexts, I draw on the contributions of a number of scholars. Urpo Kovala's pioneering study of the paratexts to Finnish translations of Anglo-American literature between 1890 and 1939 and his revelation of how "religious-conservative" ideology enacted what he terms *ideological closure* (or the delimitation of possible readings) through these paratexts provoked me to consider how longstanding negative ideologies of Blackness could facilitate certain paratextual representations of Blackness and foreclose others while the advent of other ideologies at particular historical moments could modulate, even

²² Mingjian Zha and Tianzhen Xie's two-volume *Zhongguo 20 shiji waiguo wenxue fanyi shi* [*A History of the 20th century Foreign Literary Translation in China*] (2007) was an invaluable resource for identifying a number of translations.

contest, such representations.²³ Kovala's concept of ideological closure and his elucidation of the specific features of epitexts are particularly valuable in my discussion of Zhao Jingshen's paratextual histories in chapter two. Crucially, Kovala's 1996 article established the legitimacy of *translation* paratexts as a research object.

Richard Watts has produced several studies of the colonial and postcolonial paratexts of Francophone African literature for French metropolitan as well as for African and Western audiences. Central to Watts's studies is the observation that the paratexts to African works, under the pressure of important historical changes, underwent significant changes in the context that he investigates. In the context of my study, the content of the Chinese paratexts to works by Black writers displays a high degree of thematic consistency across the eras. However, constrained by cultural understandings of Blackness that did not alter significantly over time, such discursive innovation as there was indeed appears also to have been spurred by historical/political changes. In addition, in Watts's discussion of the paratexts to Francophone women's writing, he refers to the use of what he calls the "curriculum vitae" (in blurbs for example), which often listed details about the writer's life and work background in order to "vouch for the reliability of the woman writer and of her appropriateness as witness to a

²³ See Kovala, 'Translations, Paratextual Mediation, and Ideological Closure', 119–47.

particular event or, more often, sociological condition”.²⁴ I discovered a similar phenomenon in the paratexts to Black African works translated during the Maoist period, in which details of a writer’s supposed ‘lived’ experience were provided insofar as they established the veracity of the work in question and the writer’s right to testify as to the odiousness of colonialism and imperialism. Such information was also included to signal that the work fulfilled some of the central criteria of the socialist realist/Maoist artistic paradigm and was therefore suitable for publication. I have referred to this as the *testimonial function* of Black literatures in the present work.

Cecilia Alvstad’s article on the paratexts of the translations of global South literature in Sweden also drew my attention to certain important *ethical* issues in the use of paratexts. Common to both the Chinese (especially during the period of the Chinese involvement in the activities of the Afro-Asian Writers Bureau) and the Swedish context is the construction of a transnational corpus of works from non-Western countries, under the rubric of ‘Afro-Asian’ literature in the Chinese case and ‘world literature’ in the Swedish case; these rubrics themselves create implicit connections between works that are actually quite dissimilar on the basis of their non-Western origins.²⁵ The tendency to read

²⁴ Watts, *Packaging Post/Coloniality*, sec. ‘The Social Utility of Women’s Writing’.

²⁵ Alvstad, ‘The Strategic Moves of Paratexts’, 81–84.

these works as sources of anthropological, historical or cultural information, based on the assumption that translation renders the cultural Other transparent and knowable despite its exoticism, broadly typifies both contexts as well.²⁶ Alvstad shows how inclusion on publishers' lists, for example, creates connections between literatures that would otherwise have little or nothing in common, and paratexts, such as blurbs and forewords, or presentations on publishers' websites, then reinforce these connections. The works thus "run the risk of being paratextually 'translated' into sameness, [and having] their internal differences minimized", "practices [which] might be politically and ethically problematic".²⁷ This is perhaps most applicable to my discussion of the publishing house Writers Press ('Zuojia chubanshe') in chapter five which created their own series composed of works exclusively from Asia and Africa, provided a generic introduction to the series on the inside front cover of the books as well as author biographies on the inside back cover, and listed all the works in the series on a flyleaf page or on a bookmark that was placed in the books. In addition, as Alvstad points out, the use of references to geographical location may at times serve to foreground the author's origins, perhaps to create a sense of authenticity or representativeness not in keeping with the agenda of the work in the source culture; references to geographical location were also inserted into this list of works in the Chinese case, raising precisely such

²⁶ Alvstad, 87–91.

²⁷ Alvstad, 79.

concerns. Moreover, through similar presentation strategies, paratextual connections are created between works that would otherwise not have much in common.²⁸ This issue arises in the Writers Press series as well as in chapter three, in which I argue that the paratextual presentation of the Chinese translation of Peter Abrahams's *The Path of Thunder* is almost indistinguishable from other works in a series dominated by writers from socialist countries, rendering the provenance of the novel and its author virtually invisible to Chinese readers. Finally, as Alvstad points out, the desire to access information about the places associated with these literatures may also be problematic.²⁹ Although Alvstad concedes that the intention may not always be that books or authors represent their source cultures or provide knowledge as to the actual conditions in their countries, the emphasis on geography may lead readers to expect that the work deal with, for example, "Third World topics" in the Swedish case or provide specific kinds of information. Throughout the corpus of Maoist-era Chinese translations of Black African literature, the *educational* function of the translated texts in helping Chinese readers to become more familiar with their source cultures is repeatedly stressed in the paratexts, implying that translated works can provide direct, unmediated access to their respective cultures and perhaps simultaneously diminishing their creative or aesthetic dimensions. While I have not used Alvstad's article as an explicit

²⁸ Alvstad, 83–84.

²⁹ Alvstad, 86–87.

comparative frame of reference, her delineation of these issues informed much of my discussion.

Overall, the consistency with which themes and imagery as well as words and phrases reappeared across the paratextual corpora of different eras shaped how I engaged with the material. Having established the pervasiveness of what I call the *Black slave topos* across a range of domains in the early chapters, these consistencies allowed me to posit the existence of relatively stable ideologies of Blackness as well as their resilience over time. My focus became tracking the instances of grappling with these ideologies in the literary/translation domain across the decades while attempting to account for discursive variations, absences, and innovations. While I was able at times to speculate on factors arising in the context of the biographies of individual cultural mediators in attempting to characterize such phenomena, situating the paratexts in the context of their particular cultural, political or historical moments consistently generated relatively plausible explanatory frameworks. In considering the methodological implications of the project, a number of questions arise of which two seem most pertinent. Firstly, while publishing conventions in a particular time and place clearly impact both the form and content of paratexts, to what extent do paratextual representations around particular topics establish their own discursive legacies beyond such conventions, perhaps conditioning

future representations? There is evidence of this in the cluster of paratexts produced in the late 1920s/early 1930s as well as those that framed Black American and Black African works in the 1950s. Secondly, reflecting on a context in which information about Africa and its writers was often purportedly scarce and there is evidence of borrowing on the part of various paratext writers, to what extent can past paratextual materials function as sources for future ones, perhaps thereby perpetuating misconceptions or misreadings? In the Chinese context, everything from factual information and linguistic structures to themes and imagery could be borrowed from earlier paratexts. Furthermore, what do such phenomena reveal about the cultural, historical or political contexts in which they arise and are they more prevalent in certain kinds of contexts than in others? Ultimately, paratexts constitute unique historical archives that do not only register ideological mediations and their intersections with broader contextual changes but record or hint at the hidden interactions and decisions of those involved in the creation of these materials.

IV. Chapter summaries

In chapter one, I show how a contingent discourse of Blackness, a tool for othering a wide range of peoples, had long been a part of Chinese cultural chauvinism by the turn of the nineteenth century. I suggest that the figure of the Black slave may be seen as a touchstone that epitomizes the perceptions of

Africa and its inhabitants from approximately the mid-nineteenth century onwards. Africa and Africans, though not entirely unknown in China prior to this, barely figured in the Chinese imaginary until Chinese intellectuals began to update their indigenous knowledge with Western geographical texts and missionaries began to spread accounts of a race specifically referred to as 'Black' and its homeland, often in negative racialized terms. The advent of Social Darwinist ideas in the final decades of the Qing Empire, and their appropriation by Chinese nationalist intellectuals, led to more elaborate racialized discourses in which Blacks were often mentioned as being at the bottom of a global racial hierarchy (with Africa replicating this subordinate position in geographical space), as Chinese thinkers struggled to overcome the contradiction between their assertions of racial superiority, the reality of national humiliation, and their anxieties about racial extinction. I show how the figure of the Black slave, through its use as a negative racial polarity, became a mainstay of racialized scientific and educational discourse from the turn of the century well into the Republican era and contend that this was also most likely due to the impact of Lin Shu and Wei Yi's paratextual framing and translation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* which became a turning point for the visibility of Blacks and Blackness in the world of Chinese discourse. However, the translators' use of the novel for their own political purposes and its inherent racialized ideologies served to do little more than substantiate the image conveyed through the sociological and racialized paradigms taking root in China. Despite the

fervour of his opposition to the humiliation of Chinese at home and abroad at the hands of white imperialists and colonisers, I suggest that Lin Shu's translation oeuvre ultimately appears to have sanctioned colonialism through its attempt to construct a new nationalistic vision for Chinese manhood while Africa and its peoples became little more than objects of Chinese colonial desires.

After the fall of the Qing dynasty and during the course of the first two decades of the Republican era, the contributions of a number of scholars reveal that racialized thinking became intrinsic to the emergent modern Chinese identity. I assert that the Black slave figure became a motif across a wide range of discourses during the same period. The legacy of the translation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Lin Shu and Wei Yi continued to spawn new versions of the perennial story while simultaneously perpetuating what I have called the Black slave topos in the Chinese imaginary. A central claim of this study is that the benighted and monolithic image of a continent of irretrievably inferior peoples, the original homeland of the displaced slave race in America, was consolidated by this distinctive textual/paratextual legacy and that this may have had lasting effect on the Chinese interest in, and understanding of, Africa, its anti-colonial struggles and its literatures.

In chapter two, I contend that, during the 1920s, engagement with Black literature was hindered by the institutionalization of racial hierarchism as the core of the belief system of the modernizing Chinese elite in general and, in the literary sphere, the desire for Western literary modernity by the dominant May Fourth faction. While a number of prominent Chinese writer-translators began to express an interest in the literatures of so-called ‘oppressed’ or ‘small and weak’ nations, Black peoples were effectively denied nationhood under the ideological pressure of the Black slave topos and their literatures were therefore all but invisible in the Chinese milieu. As the country became a polarized political space, contested by the Nationalists and the Communists, due to a number of internal crises in the mid-1920s, I suggest that the lurch towards left-wing sympathies by the dominant figures in the literary establishment and the increasing levels of interaction with the socialist world through the Comintern and other bodies seemed to occasion a shift in the visibility and status of Black peoples. The actual struggles of African Americans in particular could finally be foregrounded and examined.

I go on to highlight how Zhao Jingshen, a minor figure in the literary establishment, attempted to raise awareness of Black literature with his paratextual histories, despite his reluctance to offer a wholehearted endorsement of the literary value of works by Black writers and his dismissive attitude

towards the contributions of all but a few. I speculate that this was due to exposure to issues affecting Black communities worldwide through the international socialist networks and publications. By 1933, when another peripheral figure, Yang Changxi, penned the first ever full-length study of Black literature, it is clear that left-wing ideology could be deployed to counter the tenets of the Black slave topos and to recover Black nationhood; I suggest that this in turn allowed Black literature to be recovered as an expression of the nationalistic or revolutionary consciousness of a nation. It should be noted, however, that this alone was not sufficient to challenge the racialized ideologies that were by then pervasive in China. Indeed, a direct confrontation with not only white oppression of Black peoples but the racism that motivated and enabled it was, as yet, not possible in the Chinese context.

In chapter three, I begin to contest the notion that Afro-Asian solidarity is an appropriate framework in which to situate *all* the translations of Black African works in the early Maoist period by arguing that the translation of Peter Abrahams's *The Path of Thunder* (1948) in the newly established PRC must be seen as motivated primarily by commercial and political expedience at a time when the Chinese publishing industry was consumed with the translation of Soviet and Soviet-sanctioned works. Indeed, I show that the paratextual protocols enacted to frame the translation negate the significance of the novel's

debut by obscuring its provenance through the omission of vital contextual information and submerging it in a series of works from the socialist world through the use of a shared Eurocentric cover image. Later paratextual handlings of Abrahams's works would resemble those of African American writers; in both cases, I provide evidence of how the denunciation of racial oppression was used as an ideological weapon against a universal imperialist adversary of which the United States had initially been the primary incarnation. Ultimately, however, I speculate that the paratextual treatment of the later translation of Abrahams's novel *Mine Boy* (1946) signals a shift towards an emphasis on Black African literature and parallels a significant change in orientation in the CCP's foreign policy towards expressions of support and solidarity with the struggles of African nations at the end of the 1950s.

In chapter four, I suggest that, despite the fervent castigation of racial discrimination against Black Americans that characterized the early Maoist period, the racialized world view that had emerged in the first half of the twentieth century did not alter meaningfully under the communist regime. Nevertheless, the CCP's foreign policy objectives came to emphasize engagement with African nations and liberation movements as a means of ending China's international isolation and ultimately challenging the Soviet Union for leadership of the Third World. The work of several scholars has

suggested that this seems to have led to the adoption of a ‘colour’ strategy in interactions with Black interlocutors in which Chinese officials and functionaries, including Mao Zedong himself, presented the Chinese as people of colour. However, there is some evidence that, despite the growing emphasis on solidarity with Third World peoples, claims of racial unity were muted when domestic audiences were being addressed; I add to this that these claims are also conspicuously absent from the later paratexts to Black African works.

Indeed, while it is evident that the political priorities of the CCP ultimately impelled the translation of African literatures, I argue that the Chinese literary establishment do not seem to have engaged with Black African literatures in the period immediately after the Bandung conference, generally seen as a turning point for Afro-Asian solidarity. Instead, Asian and North African literatures account for much of the translation activity, as revealed in the principal translation journal of the era *Yiwen*. Dominated by May Fourth veterans such as Mao Dun, it is possible that the literary elite struggled to adapt to the demands of the new political environment, shaped, as they were, in a prior era in which Black literatures had never been a focus (not even under the rubric of ‘oppressed people’s writings’ that had previously garnered their attention) and Soviet and Western literatures had been their primary points of reference for assigning literary value. I contend that there is evidence of a shift towards Black

African literatures in the year leading up to the Afro-Asian Writers' Conference in Tashkent in 1958 and highlight the growing if marginal discursive presence of Blackness in *Yiwen*, manifested in a small number of Africa-related items and the inclusion of Black American texts and artworks.

In chapter five, with the framework developed over the prior chapters in mind, I describe the paratextual framing of the initial flurry of translations that appeared in *Yiwen* in September 1958, in anticipation of the Afro-Asian Writers' Bureau Conference in Tashkent the following month. While these translations offered Chinese readers unprecedented access to the cultural products of Africa and Black African writers were presented in a positive light by Chinese translators, the paratexts to these translations also reveal that the aesthetic or artistic elements of their works continued to be overlooked. I also highlight the persistence of problematic assumptions regarding Black Africa, its writers and its peoples as well as the ethical issues raised by certain aspects of these paratexts.

In the final section of chapter five, I link the Black African translation enterprise to an attempt at constructing a new transnational identity for Chinese reading publics while emphasizing the difficulty of legitimating such an enterprise and the embrace of new Third World allies that it signified. I show that, while some

paratextual features of prior decades were still often in evidence, criteria that had previously applied to writers from socialist bloc countries could now be foregrounded in the paratextual framings of African works in a manner not previously possible. In considering the post-Tashkent trajectories of a number of Black African works against the backdrop of the CCP's drive for recognition in the Third World, I speculate that the translation of these works may have depended on the actions of individual African writers and factors largely internal to China rather than the putative Afro-Asian framework exclusively. I describe the somewhat innovative approach to the paratextual framings of the 'Afro-Asian' series, published by Writers Press, and highlight interventions that countered previous constructions of Black peoples and Africa.

Finally, I contend that Ousmane Sembène was the Black African writer most favoured by the Chinese literary establishment during this era. I provide evidence of his success and speculate that his speech at the Tashkent conference, in which he promulgated ideas about literature and the role of writers that resonated strongly with the Maoist theories that the Chinese delegation were promoting, may have spurred the adoption of him as an ideologically appealing avatar for Black African literature. Moreover, his personal biography and works fulfilled the criteria that had previously enabled the translation of certain Black writers' works and embodied the Maoist writer

ideal. Referring primarily to the paratexts to the two translations of his novel *O Pays, mon beau peuple!* (1957), I argue that Sembène's self-consciously Marxist vision made his works suitable for consumption by Chinese readers from the point of view of the establishment and allowed for a degree of aesthetic commentary not usually seen in paratextual framings of Black writings. This, in turn, facilitated the transmission of important information about Africa, its peoples and its literatures to Chinese readers. I suggest that the paratextual framing of the second of these translations, published by Writers Press, is an unprecedented paean to a Black writer in the Chinese literary sphere and represents the pinnacle of attempts to reconfigure Chinese perceptions of Africa and Blackness during the years of the brief translation surge that ended in 1965. This framing may also have facilitated the paratextual innovations in the abovementioned Writers Press series.

PART 1:

The pre-Qing to the late Republican period up to 1936

Chapter 1

The Black slave topos: A marker of pre-Mao literary and socio-historical constructions of Blackness and Africa

1.1 The shifting discourses of Blackness in China prior to the twentieth century and the origins of the Black slave topos

This chapter is concerned with accounting for the origins, development and spread of what I call the *Black slave topos*, a cluster of stereotypes about Black peoples and Africa that would strongly influence the cultural understanding of Blackness in twentieth-century China and beyond. I highlight the rapid dissemination and pervasiveness of the discourses that constituted this topos by the 1920s as they became intrinsic to an emergent modern Chinese racial identity. I consider how a number of highly influential Qing intellectuals developed a novel racialized framework at the beginning of the century, drawing on both foreign racial theories as well as distinctive local notions of Blackness. During the Republican era, this framework was adopted, elaborated on and institutionalized by a new generation of educators and academics and disseminated through the growing publishing sector. As I will show, translation played a key role in these processes in two respects. Firstly, intellectuals were initially exposed to ideas about race by reading and translating Western books about racial or evolutionary theories; they then adapted these ideas for the

Chinese context in their own writings. Secondly, the paratexts to certain translations of Western literary works and the works themselves could act as conduits for racial ideas. In this regard, I focus on the translators Lin Shu and Wei Yi and their deployment of a what I call a *politics of indignation* in the paratextual framing of their translation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. This entailed connecting the plight of the Chinese at home and abroad to that of 'Black slaves' in the US in order to provoke outrage and inspire action. This move appears to have initiated a tendency to invoke such comparisons in a range of other situations that had the effect of further entrenching the Black slave topos. The final section deals with a few examples of works inspired by Lin Shu and Wei Yi's version of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* that testify to its enduring impact on Chinese society.

Although the use of Blackness as a marker of difference has a long history in China, the notion of Blackness as a racial characteristic and its connection with Africa and slavery had not yet coalesced in any recognizable sense by the early nineteenth century. At a quotidian level within Chinese society, Blackness was implicated in the traditional East Asian aesthetic preference for a fairer as opposed to a darker skin complexion; fair skin was also a marker of status, distinguishing those who had it from the dark-skinned others who performed menial work in the sun — but this preference was not applied to foreigners until

later. More importantly, Blackness was one of a vast array of discourses employed to ‘other’ foreigners. Prior to the mid-1800s, the concept of race was entirely foreign to the world of Chinese discourse; instead, Chinese elites had historically expressed a form of cultural chauvinism that disparaged all foreigners as a matter of course. From descriptions of imaginary physical and moral defects that illustrated their collective inferiority to Chinese people to fantastical accounts of their monstrous features that depicted them as less than human, those who produced the official discourse in the early nineteenth century seemed to engage in what Frank Dikötter calls “nihilation” or “the conceptual liquidation of everything inconsistent with official doctrine”, a common historical response to a perceived threat.¹ Historically, the category of Blackness was employed as a dualistic construct to designate an ‘other’ as a veritable binary opposite. As Don Wyatt puts it, pre-modern Chinese used ‘black’ to refer to ethnic groups that they considered utterly “unlike themselves”.² Among the most commonly-used ancient (mostly pejorative) terms for such peoples was *kunlun*. ‘*Kunlun* slaves’ was later used to designate the first identifiably African population in captivity on Chinese soil in eleventh-century Guangzhou.³ However, while slavery may have become associated with certain darker-skinned groups by this period, Blackness as expressed through

¹ Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, chap. ‘Race as Type (1793-1895)’.

² Wyatt, *The Blacks of Premodern China*, 3.

³ Wyatt, 78.

the term *kunlun* was still not exclusively African and remained unrelated to race in the Western anatomical or taxonomical senses.⁴

Rebecca Karl records that Africa was not understood to be a continent by the Chinese until the mid-1800s.⁵ A recognition of the importance of foreign knowledge began to emerge among influential Chinese intellectuals in the mid-nineteenth century. Although, as Wyatt contends, the extent of China's relative historical isolation has been greatly exaggerated, knowledge of world geography was indeed limited during this period.⁶ Negative stereotypes about foreigners persisted in new works that sought to remedy this situation, such as those by the Confucian scholars Xu Jiyu and Wei Yuan, with Africa and its inhabitants portrayed in exceedingly derogatory terms. In his *Yinghuan zhilüe* ("A brief survey of the maritime circuit"), based on various European and Chinese sources, Xu described Africa as a "desperately chaotic place, inhabited by retrograde black barbarians".⁷ He contended that "its climate and its people are the worst of the four continents", and elaborated on Africans' supposed bestial lifestyle, uncouth eating habits, rampant sexual proclivities, and passivity in the face of enslavement. This final point seems to anticipate later Chinese

⁴ Keevak, *Becoming Yellow*, 128–29.

⁵ Karl, *Staging the World: Chinese Nationalism at the Turn of the Twentieth Century*, 253.

⁶ Wyatt, *The Blacks of Premodern China*, 131.

⁷ Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, chap. 'Race as Type (1793-1895)'.

reformers' notions of a subdued 'Black race' inhabiting Africa, utterly incapable of awakening and liberating itself. Wei Yuan's *Haiguo tuzhi* ("Treatise on Maritime States") also portrays Africa as a dismal site for "the production of slaves".⁸ These texts became influential references for subsequent Chinese scholars. Moreover, the older perceptions of Black Africans as slaves were subsequently reinforced by the presence of such slaves and their European owners at places such as Macau.⁹ Dikötter emphasizes that the popular press was also filled with contempt for places like India and Africa, suggesting that these stereotypes extended beyond elite circles.¹⁰ From the 1850s onwards, encounters between Qing envoys travelling abroad and foreigners were also increasingly described in negative racial terms by the former and skin colour became an increasingly significant means of attempting to classify what were to these envoys a seemingly baffling variety of different peoples.¹¹ The accounts of these travels (perhaps especially of those to the United States) did little more than reinforce the connection between those of African descent and slavery. Moreover, "racial anxiety" about being treated in a manner comparable to Black slaves was already evident in places such as Spanish-controlled Cuba where, by 1876, tension had arisen between the slave community and the indentured Chinese workers.¹²

⁸ Karl, *Staging the World: Chinese Nationalism at the Turn of the Twentieth Century*, 120.

⁹ Karl, 253.

¹⁰ Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, chap. 'Race as Type (1793-1895)'.

¹¹ Dikötter, chap. 'Race as Type (1793-1895)'.

¹² Cheng, *Discourses of Race and Rising China*, 184.

Christian missionary writings became the source of much of the new information about the outside world, including Africa. Until the mid-nineteenth century, Chinese knowledge of Africa remained extremely limited.¹³ As Karl contends, Africa was seen as “the last truly unhistorical space of the modern world” by Chinese intellectuals, largely because of “the geographical blackness and historical blankness” of missionary accounts of the ‘dark continent’, a view reiterated by Shu-mei Shih.¹⁴ Prominent missionaries such as Timothy Richard and Young John Allen first introduced Western thought to an elite Chinese readership on a wider scale in the late nineteenth century.¹⁵ As part of this infusion of new ‘knowledge’, Chinese students were taught about the colours of the different “races of mankind” by the early 1890s in mission schools and literature about differentiation on the basis of skin colour was beginning to reach Chinese audiences.¹⁶

In understanding the trajectory of racialized thinking in China in the first part of the twentieth century, 1895 stands as a crucial year. As Karl states, China had suffered “a half-century of massive internal rebellions and continued assaults by European imperialist powers”, culminating in a humiliating defeat by Japan.¹⁷

¹³ Karl, *Staging the World: Chinese Nationalism at the Turn of the Twentieth Century*, 253.

¹⁴ Karl, 121; Shih, ‘Race and Revolution: Blackness in China’s Long Twentieth Century’, 4.

¹⁵ Wang, ‘From Petitions to Fiction: Visions of the Future Propagated in Early Modern China’, 44–45.

¹⁶ Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, chap. ‘Race as Type (1793-1895)’.

¹⁷ Karl, *Staging the World: Chinese Nationalism at the Turn of the Twentieth Century*, 12.

The sense of pervasive social, economic and political crisis and persistent external threats galvanized “a small but disproportionately influential group of Chinese educated elites” into attempting to address these problems through “the acquisition of knowledge about other places and the incorporation of this new knowledge into new structures of knowledge and social practice”. Against this backdrop, the shock of defeat to Japan led to agitation for reform and intellectual activity became focused around the theme of national survival as well as the mobilization of the urban classes in particular through education.¹⁸ A proliferation of reform-oriented societies and journals as well as a growing commercial press and increased literacy would ultimately ensure the rapid dissemination of racialized discourses, which were based on an alternative body of knowledge that no longer took the Confucian cosmological order as its primary reference point.

In this regard, the translation of works introducing evolutionary concepts to Chinese readers was to prove pivotal as they provided the theoretical underpinning for many of the reformers’ later ideas. The scholar Yan Fu translated *Evolution and Ethics* by T.H. Huxley in 1898 and Herbert Spencer’s *Study of Sociology* in 1903, among a number of other Western sociological and political texts. Shouhua Qi explains that Yan Fu’s translations are more

¹⁸ Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, chap. ‘Race as Lineage (1895-1903)’.

accurately described as “amalgams of translations, adaptations, and commentaries aimed at acculturating [Western thinkers] and making them urgently relevant and applicable to the Chinese situation”.¹⁹ These publications were extremely popular; the Huxley text, for example, ran into thirty print editions, reaching educated audiences across the country. Peter Zarrow asserts that Yan’s introduction to Chinese readers of “a world of the struggle for survival and selection of the fittest — a fearsome place where the unfit perished...corresponded to the international world China had been discovering since the 1840s” and thus rapidly took root among many Chinese intellectuals.²⁰

As an important precursor of other reformers, Yan Fu’s ideas regarding Africa and Blackness warrant further attention. Compelled by a “bleak vision of racial competition”, he jettisoned traditional notions of a civilized centre and a ‘barbarian’ periphery and instead expounded on a racial hierarchy, with geographical regions linked to specific races who were in a state of permanent conflict.²¹ He described the ‘Black race’ as the “lowest” of the races, linked them specifically to the regions of Africa and the tropics, and called them *heinu* or ‘Black slaves’, a category that was used extensively to designate Africans in

¹⁹ Qi, *Western Literature in China and the Translation of a Nation*, 32.

²⁰ Zarrow, *China in War and Revolution, 1895 - 1949*, 60.

²¹ Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, chap. ‘Race as Lineage (1895-1903)’.

general until the 1920s.²² The grafting of slavery onto the racial identity of Black Africans is apparent in Yan's formulation. The meaning of 'lowest' is also worthy of further examination as it reveals a deeper reason for this conflation: the degraded position of Black people was inevitable not only due to their evolutionary heritage but also to geographical space which they inhabited. Moreover, Yan projected the nightmare of racial extinction onto the darker races, warning that the Chinese would also be enslaved by the whites and asking rhetorically what prevented the "four hundred million yellows" from meeting the same fate as the "brown and black races".²³

The cornerstone of the racialized thinking popularized by the reformers was the notion of the Chinese as *huangzhong* which meant both 'yellow race' and 'descendants of the Yellow Emperor'.²⁴ Michael Keevak notes that the reformers were selective about which aspects of Western racial theory they chose to import, rejecting the notion of Chinese being members of the 'Mongolian race' while willingly self-identifying as 'yellow' because of its

²² Dikötter, 'Racial Discourse in China: Continuities and Permutations', 20. During the course of the Ming and Qing dynasties, this category emerged to denote "a global black slavery of mainly Africans". While *heinu* remained the most common, other terms that also combined colour and status included "*guinu* (...devil slave; "devil" here means "foreign black devil"), *heigui* (...black devil, a term today still used as a racial slur), *wugui* (...darker black devil), *heifan* (...black barbarian), *heisi* (...black servant), etc" (see Cheng, *Discourses of Race and Rising China*, 179). *Wangguo nu* or 'slave of a lost country' linked the spectre of colonisation with the fate of being enslaved, and the partition of Africa by Western powers, visible on maps of the period, was a chilling visual representation of the nightmare which reformers were warning against (see Karl, *Staging the World: Chinese Nationalism at the Turn of the Twentieth Century*, 123).

²³ Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, chap. 'Race as Lineage (1895-1903)'.

²⁴ Dikötter, 'Racial Discourse in China: Continuities and Permutations', 15.

resonance with the traditional symbolism of the colour.²⁵ Dikötter argues that lineage feuds, that had been a feature of Qing Empire, inspired a vision of racial war, in which the racial groups highest in the newly imagined hierarchy, namely the ‘yellow’ and the ‘white’, competed for dominance, while the inferior ‘brown’, ‘red’ and ‘black’ ‘breeds’ faced extinction due to their hereditary inadequacy.²⁶ The historical success of the whites in conquering other races was used to provoke anxieties that the ‘yellows’ could also be doomed to racial extinction or *miezhong*, an elaboration on the discourse of *miezu* or lineage extinction.²⁷ The necessary precondition to avert such a fate was the “cohesive force of the group (*qunli*)” which could be fostered by nationalism, a principle of which the “barbarian red” and “savage black races” were thought to be ignorant.²⁸ The writer Tang Caichang synthesized this racial hierarchy as follows: “Yellow and white are wise, red and black are stupid; yellow and white are rulers, red and black are slaves; yellow and white are *united*, red and black are *scattered*”.²⁹

²⁵ Keevak, *Becoming Yellow*, 128.

²⁶ Dikötter, ‘Racial Discourse in China: Continuities and Permutations’, 15–16.

²⁷ Bonnett records that some Chinese intellectuals, however, strongly rejected the use of terms such as ‘white race’ or ‘yellow race’ because of their implicit violation of the Sinocentric world order (see Bonnett, *Anti-Racism*, 33).

²⁸ Dikötter, ‘Racial Discourse in China: Continuities and Permutations’, 17.

²⁹ Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, chap. ‘Race as Lineage (1895-1903)’. Italics in the quotation are mine.

Yan's ideas were further developed by, among others, the foremost reformers of the day: Liang Qichao and Kang Youwei. In the elaborations of these two figures, Blackness remained the negative pole of an increasingly biologically inscribed sense of 'yellowness', and thus came to embody a doomed hereditary and cultural inferiority, the characterizations of which became viscerally repugnant. Simultaneously, unable to dismiss whiteness in a similar fashion because of the realities of European hegemony, they came to associate the 'yellow' with the 'white' as a way of recovering a sense of civilizational superiority that had used to have a Confucian underpinning but was now located in the bodies of the innately superior 'yellow' race. The contradiction inherent in acknowledging 'white' power while continuing to insist on 'yellow' superiority was resolved by the seeming aberrant nature of the historical moment: 'yellow' power would finally either assimilate or subjugate 'white' too but first it had to avert a 'Black' fate.

To Liang's mind, the 'yellow' and white races were what he termed 'historical' (*you lishide zhongzu*), destined to determine the course of history, while 'blacks', 'reds', and 'browns' were 'ahistorical' (*fei lishide zhongzu*); would be subjugated by the former group; and ultimately, eliminated.³⁰ Liang consistently disparaged the darker races as biologically inferior to whites and 'yellows',

³⁰ Dikötter, chap. 'Race as Lineage (1895-1903)'.

calling the Black and brown groups “lazy and stupid”, driven only by instincts such as hunger and sex. While Irene Eber records that Liang had noted that Blacks were making progress towards greater freedoms and rights after the Civil War, both she and Dikötter concur that he appears to have endorsed many of the era’s most outrageous stereotypes, even attempting to rationalize lynching by citing what he viewed as the pathological sexual obsession with white women among Black men in America.³¹ Arkush and Lee note that Liang, like many Chinese visitors to America, seems to have been willing to “adopt the prejudices of the dominant group” while retaining a degree of “sympathy for victimized blacks”.³²

Kang Youwei also believed in an inflexible racial hierarchy and, in his utopian vision a future world of racial harmony in his book *Datong shu* (“The Book of Great Unity”), he asserted that whites and ‘yellows’, as the ‘fittest’ of the races, would ultimately become indistinguishable while the inferior races should be vanquished or mixed with the superior until the “evil seeds” of the latter disappear through natural selection.³³ Kang also proposed ways of transforming the darker races: dietary change, intermarriage, migration and sterilization.³⁴

³¹ Eber, *Voices from Afar*, 4–5; Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, chap. ‘Race as Lineage (1895-1903)’.

³² Arkush and Lee, *Land Without Ghosts*, 8.

³³ Shih, ‘Race and Revolution: Blackness in China’s Long Twentieth Century’, 3.

³⁴ Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, chap. ‘Race as Lineage (1895-1903)’.

Since the appearance of Africans was thought to be repulsive to whites and ‘yellows’, those who intermarried with them should receive medals for their contributions to purifying the race. Kang’s environmental determinism led him to suggest that elderly Africans should be relocated to Canada and South America while the best of the Africans could be sent to Europe, based on the ‘observation’ that other races’ complexions lightened or darkened depending on the region to which they had migrated. In Kang’s framework, inferiority was embedded in Black bodies and his fantasy of future racial harmony revolved around the elimination of Blackness through the violence of assimilation rather than that of European exterminations. As Hiroko Sakamoto argues, his ideas drew openly on eugenicist discourses (derived from Japanese as well as Western sources) that would continue to evolve and become increasingly popular later in early twentieth-century China.³⁵

Karl implies that Dikötter underestimates the significance of the Chinese use of the term *tongzhong* (‘same kind/race’) which could be invoked as a marker of sameness in relation to another people who had lost territory to the imperial powers and faced annihilation.³⁶ Dikötter contends that *tongzhong* was merely a temporary and expedient expression of pan-Asianism.³⁷ While it is true that

³⁵ Sakamoto, ‘The Cult of “Love and Eugenics” in May Fourth Movement Discourse’, 337.

³⁶ Karl, ‘Creating Asia’, 1104.

³⁷ Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, chap. ‘Race as Lineage (1895-1903)’.

tongzhong could be employed to designate a commonality with a wide range of peoples (including ‘darker’ peoples like Indians), neither author mentions this as having been extended to Black African peoples. By the early twentieth century, it is apparent that Blackness was no longer a fluid or contingent marker of difference in Chinese discourse. Instead, it would appear that, under the influence of a translated and adapted form of Social Darwinism, Chinese national identity came to be located in the bodies of an active and united ‘yellow race’, inhabiting a historical space, that could in no sense be associated with what reforming elites constructed as a passive and disunited Black race, inhabiting the ahistorical space of Africa. Indeed, as Dikötter contends, “‘race’ thus gradually emerged as the most common symbol of national cohesion, permanently replacing more conventional emblems of cultural identity”.³⁸ The seeming ‘bias’ against Africa was as much the product of the racialization of China’s identity discourse as it was a perception that Africa as a space did not produce (and could not produce) the consciousness that enabled its peoples to engage in the imagined quintessentially modern activities of uniting and struggling for freedom as it had already been overwhelmed by the West and its peoples had been enslaved.³⁹ Therefore, despite an “episodic and contradictory Chinese self-identification with the ‘oppressed of the world’” between 1895 and

³⁸ Dikötter, ‘Racial Discourse in China: Continuities and Permutations’, 16.

³⁹ See Karl, *Staging the World: Chinese Nationalism at the Turn of the Twentieth Century*, 121.

1905, Chinese intellectuals never embraced Black Africans as the ‘same race’, any association with latter instead inspiring shame.⁴⁰

Indeed, the overwhelming determinism of Africa as a geographical space and Black skin as a marker of inferiority seemed to preclude any recognition of the successful examples of struggles mounted against imperialism by Black Africans and therefore denied them the possibility of modernity in the sense construed by reformers. Figures such as Samori Touré, the Muslim cleric who founded and led an empire that incorporated sections of several present-day countries including Guinea and Mali and fiercely resisted the French, were seemingly ignored or barely mentioned in the writings of reformers.⁴¹ The victory of the Abyssinians over Italy in 1896 was alluded to but never emphasized.⁴² Ironically, although the victories of the Boers were initially disregarded, seemingly because of an incomplete understanding of who these “Africans” were, the Boer War soon became the focus of exhaustive debate among reformers and they too were celebrated as an example of a strong and united nation from whom the Chinese could learn. Boer oppression of other groups in southern Africa was simply ignored.⁴³ Karl explains that ,“among the

⁴⁰ Karl, 200; Shih, ‘Race and Revolution: Blackness in China’s Long Twentieth Century’, 4.

⁴¹ Jansen, ‘A Critical Note on “The Epic of Samori Toure”’, 219.

⁴² Karl, *Staging the World: Chinese Nationalism at the Turn of the Twentieth Century*, 253. Another example was perhaps the victory of the Zulus at Isandlwana in 1879.

⁴³ For a full discussion of the significance of the Boers to the Chinese reformers, see Karl, 117–48.

dozens of essays on the Boers”, local African peoples are largely ignored and the few works that mention them “merely figure these peoples as part of a landscape that is quickly repressed”.⁴⁴ Furthermore, the fact that the Boers were descended from Europeans figured prominently in the spurious explanations offered for their successes and Chinese reformers were adept in recasting their struggles in terms that did not violate their emergent racial and geographical hierarchy.⁴⁵

1.2 The emergence of a racialized modern Chinese identity and the consolidation of the Black slave topos during the Republican era (1911–1936)

Frank Dikötter argues that concept of race had become intrinsic to Chinese identity by the end of the Republican era. He has made a singular contribution in uncovering racial discourses in scientific and educational literatures that were often intended for popular consumption.⁴⁶ The spread of such discourses was facilitated by the emergence of a new educated elite who replaced the traditional gentry in especially the coastal metropolises and for whom science, rather than Confucian cosmology, was the principal explanatory framework for the ‘truth’ that was “encoded in nature”. Their beliefs were characterized by the

⁴⁴ Karl, 130.

⁴⁵ Shih, ‘Race and Revolution: Blackness in China’s Long Twentieth Century’, 4.

⁴⁶ Dikötter, ‘Racial Discourse in China: Continuities and Permutations’, 18–21.

construction of human biology as “the epistemological foundation of the social order” and the notion that truth could be extracted through scientific investigations into different population groups through the lenses of fields such as genetics and embryology. The dissemination of these beliefs was also promoted by an expansion of the publishing industry and literacy, as well as the growing use of the vernacular language in books and periodicals, which made knowledge accessible to a wider than ever audience and entrenched the new broader scientific orientation.

The racial hierarchies that scholars such as Yan Fu, Liang Qichao and Kang Youwei had first adumbrated were thus not contradicted in any meaningful sense and indeed began to be legitimized by the new elites. As one of the cornerstones of this increasingly prevalent view, race had found its way into school textbooks by 1920. As Dikötter’s extract from a primary school text reveals, school children were being exposed to many of the notions that the Qing reformers had already popularized:

Mankind is divided into five races. The yellow and white races are relatively strong and intelligent. Because the other races are feeble and stupid, they are being exterminated by the white race. Only the yellow race competes with the white race. This is so-called evolution...

Among the contemporary races that could be called superior, there are only the yellow and the white races. China is the yellow race...⁴⁷

The ongoing centrality of Social Darwinism and racialized thinking is evident in the above statements, as is the persistence of extinction discourse, a feature of many strains of racialized thought in the West from the Victorian era onwards. More significantly, the ‘yellow race’ is described as on a par and ‘competing’ with the white race, hinting at the growing political utility of race. Dikötter states that “racial discourse was a dominant practice which cut across most political positions”.⁴⁸ It readily lent itself to appeals to a cultural sense of belonging based on “presumed immutable links of blood” and defining in- and out-groups as well as providing a relatively stable set of biological principles for explaining the social differences between various groups.

Unlike the previous generation of intellectuals, however, the post-Qing generation of “cultural intermediaries” including “social reformers, professional writers, medical researchers, [and] university professors” were often trained in Western academic fields and sought to consolidate racial categories through appeals to science itself.⁴⁹ The validity of race having achieved broad-based acceptance among these intellectuals, many became interested in establishing

⁴⁷ Dikötter, 21.

⁴⁸ Dikötter, 22.

⁴⁹ Dikötter, 19.

the biological boundaries between the Chinese and other groups.⁵⁰ Studies on such topics as the higher cranial weight of Chinese brains as compared with those of specimens from other races as an indicator of the degree of civilization or references to the excavation of Peking Man as evidence of the ancientness of the Chinese race were often cited as proof of its superiority.⁵¹ In addition, blood purity and the absence of body hair would be construed by certain scholars as features of the Chinese that clearly distinguished them from other groups. An emphasis on racial purity and the persistent fear of degeneration led to a widespread belief in the importance and efficacy of eugenics; a proliferation of educational literature introduced the principles of this field to lay readers and injunctions to the individual to take responsibility for the preservation and health of the race were common.⁵²

Implicit in the attempt to stake out these boundaries is the notion that ‘Chineseness’ was “rooted in every part of the body” and that cultural differences with other peoples could therefore also be explained through references to racialized bodies.⁵³ This served to heighten a sense of contrast with other groups and therefore of the distinctiveness of the in-group as well as

⁵⁰ Dikötter mentions that, although some intellectuals contested aspects of the dominant racial paradigm, no meaningful intellectual challenge was seemingly ever mounted against it.

⁵¹ Dikötter, ‘Racial Discourse in China: Continuities and Permutations’, 19–20.

⁵² Dikötter, 25.

⁵³ Dikötter, 20.

to legitimate and intensify ‘othering’. Black Africans in particular were depicted in an extremely derogatory manner in writings that now had the growing aura of scientific authority. Dikötter quotes several scientific texts of the period that presented Blacks as backward, malodorous and animal-like physically, sometimes even classifying them along with primates; in addition, their intelligence was derided as inferior.⁵⁴ One such example was “a popular zoology textbook first published in 1916” that stated that “the ‘inferior races’ (*liedeng zhongzu*) had a facial index similar to that of the orang-utan” and classified the “black slave” in “the gorilla branch”.

Dikötter provides a number of other examples of this type of stereotyping in his full-length work *The Discourse of Race in Modern China* but is also careful to point out that these notions were also “pervasive and influential” in the West between the world wars and beyond.⁵⁵ Despite the addition of seemingly precise and objective details to these discussions, based on various types of ‘scientific measures’, it is clear that the constructs of Blacks and Blackness had not shifted substantially since the late Qing era. Indeed, the persistently negative traits that were attributed to Black Africans perhaps hint at their continuing function as

⁵⁴ Dikötter, 20–21.

⁵⁵ Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, chap. ‘Race as Species (1915-1949)’.

constituting a negative racial polarity that enabled Chinese-ness to ‘shine’ by contrast, although other groups could be disparaged in a similar fashion.

Moreover, the proliferation of these ‘scientific’ ideas, together with those circulating in the influential literary realm as I will reveal in the next few sections, could impact other areas of social concern. For example, a connection between the situation of Chinese women and the enslavement of Blacks in the United States was made as early as 1907 by He Yinzhen, an early anarchist and feminist thinker, who claimed that slave girls in China served under conditions of “harsh industriousness” just as the American Blacks did but that the motivation for slavery in the Chinese case was not primarily for profit.⁵⁶ As evolutionary and eugenicist discourses gained momentum among intellectuals, the role of women as “mothers” of the nation as well as their being essential to the “strength” and “intelligence” of the race began to spread and the struggle of Chinese women against the old patriarchal order was increasingly foregrounded. In 1912 (the year after the fall of the Qing), a statement in a women’s journal noted that Chinese women had, for thousands of years, been “submerged in a sea of suffering, having resigned ourselves to a state of obedience much like that of black African slaves”.⁵⁷ Sakamoto suggests that such comparisons show

⁵⁶ Liu, Karl, and Ko, *The Birth of Chinese Feminism*, 76.

⁵⁷ Sakamoto, ‘The Cult of “Love and Eugenics” in May Fourth Movement Discourse’, 350–51.

not only “a strong consciousness of race” but an anger at being treated in a manner comparable to Black slaves, thereby marshalling a similar argument to that pursued in the previous decade when the juxtaposition of Chinese workers with Black slaves (which I will discuss in subsequent sections) was intended to provoke a sense of racial indignation (what I call a *politics of indignation*).

Sakamoto contends that a new concept of motherhood was constructed “with the aim of creating intelligent, healthy, and independent national subjects” who were clearly distinguishable from the Black slaves who had showed no agency in their own liberation.⁵⁸

As mentioned earlier, revolutionary or Social Darwinist discourses in China were not simply replicas of Western discourses but rather somewhat hybridized. Prescientific or cultural concepts thus continued to persist in what were presented as ‘scientific’ texts. I have already mentioned that ‘Black slave’ was a distinctive category of slave in the Chinese language. Whereas slavery as a practice could be legitimated through references to ‘science’ in the West, I argue that ‘Black slave’ came to be treated as an *a priori* ontological category in the Chinese context; the validity of assigning slavish attributes to Black people did not generally require justification even if slavery as an institution was not endorsed. Dikötter provides a number of further examples in which ‘slave’

⁵⁸ Sakamoto, 368.

became part of scientific categories, such as Gu Shoubai's odd categorization of the "'black slave race' (*heinu zhongzu*), 'little black slave race' (*xiao heinu zhongzu*), and a 'standard black slave race' (*zhun heinu zhongzu*) in his popular introductions to human geography" and Gong Tingzhang's captioning of the image of an African in a suit as a "black slave from Africa".⁵⁹ Dikötter suggests that Blackness had remained the mark of the slave since ancient times and that such references were widespread until the end of the 1920s. He therefore appears to be speculating that a potential reason for the curious persistence of this term could be its historical usage, in much the same way as the clearly derogatory 'dwarf slave' continued to be applied to the Japanese. While it is true that the use of the term 'Black slave' appears to have emerged before the late Qing and that Yan Fu himself had referred to this group, I suggest that this is perhaps only a partial explanation. I argue that reasons for the curious persistence of the Black slave topos must be sought not only in the continuing function of Blackness as a negative racial polarity against which the Chinese race may be shown to be superior. Rather, the addition of the 'slave' component made Blackness, as Karl puts it, "the metaphorical and literal expression for the depths to which any people could sink".⁶⁰ As Karl suggests, Blackness became the repository of 'slavishness'; the slave basically lacked the "consciousness" that "now divided the civilized from the uncivilized", "the historical from the

⁵⁹ Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, chap. 'Race as Species (1915-1949)'.

⁶⁰ Karl, *Staging the World: Chinese Nationalism at the Turn of the Twentieth Century*, 123.

unhistorical” and ultimately “people” from “slaves”. In this respect, the ‘Black slave race’ formulation is not only descriptor of the physical characteristics of a people considered inferior but an inherent negation of their potential to awaken politically, unify and enter history as modern subjects.

1.3 The Black slave topos in the literary sphere: The impact of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* in China

1.3.1 ‘Made to conform’: *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and Lin Shu and Wei Yi’s politics of indignation

It is not surprising that literature itself would become a conduit for racial ideas, given racialized thinking’s displacement of traditional thought, and that politically motivated translators would feel entitled to appropriate aspects of foreign literature in order to further their agendas against the backdrop of ongoing perceived crises. The most influential of these translators during this period was Lin Shu, responsible for the Chinese rendering of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe and widely acknowledged as a ‘path-breaking’ figure in the field of literary translation and the development of modern Chinese literature.⁶¹ Lin’s selection of particular texts is revealing; Stowe’s book, as will be shown, was an overtly political choice, but a similar reformist impulse also

⁶¹ Baker, ‘Translated Images of the Foreign in the Early Works of Lin Shu (1852-1924) and Pearl S. Buck (1892-1973): Accommodation and Appropriation’, 37–39.

seems to have motivated his persistent interest in the works of Henry Rider Haggard. Inclined, as his contemporaries were, towards viewing his readers as extremely impressionable and eager that they should imbibe the desired interpretation of books such as Stowe's, Lin also chose to shape their perceptions through the addition of paratexts. These were quite prescriptive at times and saturated in the racialized discourse of his reformer peers. At stake was the question of who the Chinese *were* and who they *should be* from the perspective of Lin and other reformers. In brief, were they content to be aging and stoic 'Uncle Toms' or were they willing to rise up like the character George Harris and flog their tormentors? This question hints at the deployment of what I term a *politics of indignation* which aimed at arousing the patriotic spirit of the Chinese reader through highlighting that his or her compatriots were being forced to submit to treatment that a race considered inferior had suffered.

Although less overtly political than his reformer peers, the erudite Lin was also moved by the Japanese defeat of China, and joined Kang and Liang in protesting the terms of the peace treaty as well as urging for reform.⁶² Like them, Lin was a royalist who was in favour of a constitutional monarchy for China, a position which, in addition to his cultural conservatism, gradually transformed him into an anachronism in the eyes of later, more radical

⁶² Qi, *Western Literature in China and the Translation of a Nation*, 40.

intellectuals.⁶³ He is now principally remembered as having introduced a new generation of Chinese readers to 213 pieces of Western literature.⁶⁴ As Margaret Baker notes, Lin and his collaborators were the first to enable a “cross-cultural literary encounter” between Qing intellectuals and foreign works; the success of his many translation projects greatly raised the status of fiction in China.⁶⁵ Qi notes that, although Lin’s translations were extremely popular among the educated elite, his choice of works for translation and his style were criticized by later writers, many of whom had grown up reading his works.

My claim that Lin Shu’s translation oeuvre was a vehicle for the dissemination of racialized discourses is supported by Wanlong Gao’s assertion that Lin’s ideas about the power of fiction also resonated strongly with Liang and Yan’s and that he “turned their ideas into reality”.⁶⁶ Moreover, Leo Tak-Hung Chan speculates that even Lin’s translations of Aesop’s fables (with the co-operation of Yan Fu’s sons) may have been intended to spread evolutionary ideas among the Chinese reading public “and to urge them to take action before the country got devoured like the lamb by the wolf”.⁶⁷ The prefaces and postscripts to his translations in particular highlight his belief in the appeal as well as the

⁶³ Gao, ‘Recasting Lin Shu A Cultural Approach to Literary Translation’, 110.

⁶⁴ Kwan, ‘Rejuvenating China’, 34.

⁶⁵ Baker, ‘Translated Images of the Foreign in the Early Works of Lin Shu (1852-1924) and Pearl S. Buck (1892-1973): Accommodation and Appropriation’, 36.

⁶⁶ Gao, ‘Recasting Lin Shu A Cultural Approach to Literary Translation’, 121–22.

⁶⁷ Chan, ‘Liberal Versions: Late Qing Approaches to Translating Aesop’s Fables’, 72.

educational value of fiction, in the importance of the content and form of Western novels at a time when they were initially seen as inferior to Chinese literature, and in the role of literature in “national political success or failure”. As Baker contends, the hope for political success and the reversal of failure informed the agenda of the translation of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*:

It is apparent that they have modelled their project on Liang Qichao’s conception of the “political novel”. In Liang’s 1898 essay on the necessity for reform in Chinese fiction, he had proposed that in the West, “often the publication of a single political novel would change the views of an entire nation”...Lin and Wei [Lin’s collaborator] surely both intended *Heinu yutian lu* [*Uncle Tom’s Cabin*] to be just such a political novel.⁶⁸

Lin Shu and his collaborators also had no reason to doubt the validity of the racial theories being popularized by his intellectual peers. Lin was also wholly dependent on the information gleaned from the translations and commentaries of these peers in the translation process.⁶⁹ Baker states that Lin and others were attempting to apply Social Darwinism “to their experiences of domination by other nations” through using the “terminology of ‘race’” and that its influence was “unmistakable” in the peritexts associated with the Stowe text. Lin, for example, expressed his anxiety about racial extinction in both the preface and

⁶⁸ Baker, ‘Translated Images of the Foreign in the Early Works of Lin Shu (1852-1924) and Pearl S. Buck (1892-1973): Accommodation and Appropriation’, 110.

⁶⁹ Kwan, ‘Rejuvenating China’, 43.

the afterword to his translation.⁷⁰ This is reminiscent of Yan's ideas, which were in turn inspired by Huxley and Spencer. However, Victorian novels themselves could be conduits of racialized thinking and Lin seems to have acted as both a recipient through his act of translation and, ultimately, as a facilitator of the transmission of such ideas. An example of this is the extinction discourse that pervaded Victorian fiction. Patrick Brantlinger shows how extinction discourse could operate paradoxically in the Victorian context: it described or even mourned the inevitable vanishing of races regarded as inferior to whites when coming into contact with the latter, while, especially from the late nineteenth century onwards, anticipating the degeneration and extinction of the white race itself.⁷¹ In attempting to shape the reading of the novel, Lin's warning about racial extinction in his "translator's notes" was not simply generalized fear-mongering but construed in terms of a white racial adversary, a view most likely derived from the work of Yan and other peers but also substantiated by the 'evidence' presented in the work of fiction itself:

In this book the miseries of the black slaves are depicted in detail... *I am merely transcribing what is contained in the original work. And the prospect of the imminent demise of the yellow race has made me feel even sadder...* Those who favour the white race, on the other hand, under the erroneous illusion that Westerners are generous with vassals, are eager to follow or

⁷⁰ Baker, 'Translated Images of the Foreign in the Early Works of Lin Shu (1852-1924) and Pearl S. Buck (1892-1973): Accommodation and Appropriation', 113; Lin, 'Translator's Notes to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*', 78-79.

⁷¹ Brantlinger, *Dark Vanishings*, 192.

join them. In this respect, there are indeed quite a few readers for whom this book should serve as a warning.⁷²

The realism of the situation depicted in the novel is seemingly critical to Lin's agenda, as the claim to have been only 'transcribing' the details of the "miseries" in the original suggests. This is reinforced by the following statements in the afterword:

According to Stowe herself, the book is largely based on what she personally heard and saw. Seventy or eighty percent actually happened, and only twenty or thirty percent is fiction. The names of men and women in the book are mostly false, but in reality there were such persons.⁷³

Black slaves represented a potential future for the Chinese; slavery was an intermediate stage for those races whom Yan had described as "wavering between life and death".⁷⁴ Lin later exhorted his readers to "love our country and preserve our race" in order to avert such a fate, mentioning the runaway slave George Harris's reference to not having a country in his letter in the novel.⁷⁵ As Lin saw it, the possession of a country was ultimately all that separated Blacks and Chinese in terms of their respective situations at that time, and he was thus reiterating the racially-inscribed nationalism or patriotism typical of many Qing reformers in which action inspired by a love for China

⁷² Lin, 'Translator's Notes to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*', 78. Italics are mine.

⁷³ Lin, 79.

⁷⁴ Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, chap. 'Race as Lineage (1895-1903)'.

⁷⁵ Lin, 'Translator's Notes to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*', 79–80.

became a precondition for racial survival. Not surprisingly, the presentation of the situation of the Black slaves in this novel as a cautionary tale reinforced the association of Blackness with slavery. This is also exemplified by the Chinese title which uses *heinu* (thereby placing Black slaves in a category of their own as noted elsewhere) and omits Tom's name, offering instead the image of anonymous Black slaves bewailing their circumstances.

Before discussing other aspects of this translation, it is necessary to explore the reasons for the peculiar resonance of the figure of the Black slave in the late Qing period. Keshia A. Brown characterizes the significance of this figure by suggesting that Lin's translation of Stowe's novel "demonstrates...how the Black body in this historical context was more important than the experience of Blacks as *the Black body was used to establish and assert a Chinese identity*".⁷⁶ Jing Tsu provides a useful historical outline of the issues around which this appropriation of the Black slave figure revolved:

Remarking on the prospect of racial extinction for the Chinese, writers and intellectuals in the early 20th century often cited as an example of China's feebleness the problem of unprotected Chinese labourers abroad... From boycotts to underground resistance, the projection of the figure of the sojourner, straying from the protective reaches of his homeland, was a powerful image in inciting indignation and outrage in nationalistic

⁷⁶ Brown, 'Blackness in Exile: W.E.B. Du Bois' Role in the Formation of Representations of Blackness Conceptualized by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)', 23. Italics are mine.

memory... *If China were not so weak, it was often concluded, the Chinese labourers would not have had to endanger themselves in foreign lands, suffering gross abuse and discrimination as a result.* The fact of their mistreatment in California, for example, increasingly made known through newspaper reports and travelogues in the 1870s and 1880s, further reinforced this sense of national demise...⁷⁷

It is worth noting that the considerable popularity of Lin's translation of Stowe's book almost certainly played a part in fuelling the anti-foreign activities described above.⁷⁸ The plight of Chinese labourers abroad exposed a fatal weakness in the project of racial preservation: the Qing empire's failure to protect its own citizens in other countries made intellectuals question its ability to preserve the integrity and sovereignty of the country as a whole — and thus the race. Liang Qichao encapsulated this problem by writing that “when the state is destroyed, the people/race follows it” and thus that “the disaster of people/race extinction...is imminent”.⁷⁹ Among the revolutionaries of the period (important figures such as Sun Yat-sen, Zhang Binglin, and Liu Shipei), as distinct from the reformers discussed so far, this “disaster” had already come to pass, as Manchu dynastic rule represented a form of enslavement for the Han

⁷⁷ Tsu, ‘Extinction and Adventures on the Chinese Diasporic Frontier’, 250. Italics are mine.

⁷⁸ Baker, ‘Translated Images of the Foreign in the Early Works of Lin Shu (1852-1924) and Pearl S. Buck (1892-1973): Accommodation and Appropriation’, 179; Cheung, ‘The Discourse of Occidentalism? Wei Yi and Lin Shu’s Treatment of Religious Material in Their Translation of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*’, 142.

⁷⁹ Karl, *Staging the World: Chinese Nationalism at the Turn of the Twentieth Century*, 69.

Chinese majority and its overthrow was thus essential.⁸⁰ This also most likely increased the educated reading public's receptiveness to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

The struggles of Blacks in America provided a powerful example of the indignities people who had lost their homeland suffered — and could therefore be used as a warning when necessary. Those groups who had met such a fate were called *wangguo nu* or 'the slaves of a lost country', "an obediently passive people", who were the "terror-filled portent of modern oblivion".⁸¹ Despite the fact that census data from 1870 onwards indicated otherwise, the notion that the Blacks were doomed to racial oblivion remained common in both America and China.⁸² Much to the chagrin of Chinese thinkers, their compatriots were suffering what they perceived to be comparable treatment at the hands of the white American elite. As mentioned earlier, the Qing reformers do not seem to have had a positive view of Black people and were not inclined to embrace them as equals. While colonialism and imperialism had affected the domestic populations of countries worldwide and some of these could, for pragmatic ends, be referred to as *tongzhong* (or the 'same race' in Karl's terms) as already

⁸⁰ Sun's ideas are important to note in this context as they represent both a consolidation of reformer ideas about race by a figure who would come to wield real political power and a specific elaboration of these ideas, entailing the articulation of the centrality of the Han ethnic majority in China to the composition of the so-called yellow race, based on descent from the mythological Yellow Emperor (see Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, chap. 'Race as Nation (1903-1915)'). This, in turn, was the basis of Sun's anti-Manchu stance, which was not shared by figures such as Lin Shu and Liang Qichao.

⁸¹ Karl, *Staging the World: Chinese Nationalism at the Turn of the Twentieth Century*, 120.

⁸² Brantlinger, *Dark Vanishings*, 197.

stated, these thinkers were left in the irksome position of only having the Black diaspora as a reference point for the contemporaneous situation of the Chinese abroad.

Brown suggests that “reading about Black Americans and thinking about Chinese oppression” was the dominant theme of the pre-1949 Chinese engagement with the African American ‘experience’; Lin Shu and his collaborator Wei Yi appear to have established the terms of this engagement early in the twentieth century.⁸³ Lin was among the first to conflate the oppression of African Americans with that suffered by his own compatriots:

*Recently the treatment of blacks in America has been carried over to yellow people... Our people's livelihood is impoverished to the extent that they cannot make ends meet. Thus they support themselves by going to America to work... As a result, the yellow people are probably treated even worse than the blacks. But our country's power is weak, and our envoys are cowardly and afraid of arguing with the Americans. Furthermore, no educated person has recorded what has happened, and I have no way to gain factual knowledge. The only precedent I can rely on is *A Black Slave's Cry to Heaven* [*Uncle Tom's Cabin*].⁸⁴*

This passage in the afterword of his translation is an early example of the use of fiction to establish that ‘facts’ about a situation abroad, a tendency that persisted

⁸³ Brown, ‘Blackness in Exile: W.E.B. Du Bois’ Role in the Formation of Representations of Blackness Conceptualized by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)’, 23.

⁸⁴ Lin, ‘Translator’s Notes to *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*’, 78. Italics are mine.

and intensified in the Maoist period under the influence of socialist realism. Lin refers to the actual historical migration of Chinese workers to America as well as their collective victimization by Americans and then cites Stowe's book as a potential source of information for the precise character of this mistreatment. Finally, while it must be acknowledged that nominal slavery in America had ended by the time they came to translate this work, Lin and Wei's paratexts show that their translation is, in a sense, at odds with Stowe's agenda. As Marc S. Gallicchio and Jing Tsu also suggest, they were not as interested in having Chinese readers respond with sympathy to the plight of Black slaves as they were in making them ponder the oppression of their own people.⁸⁵ This is accentuated by the fact that the translation team effectively silenced Stowe's peritextual voice by completely removing her final chapter (entitled 'Concluding Remarks'), in which she implored her readers to take action against the evils of slavery, and replacing it with Lin's own postface.⁸⁶ The relative lack of importance attached to the specific struggles of the Black slaves also characterizes Wei Yi's fiery preface in which he bemoaned the 'slave mentality' of the Chinese people that had placed them in peril of being the victims of the same treatment as the Blacks and castigated their willingness to seek such treatment by going to foreign lands.⁸⁷ Brown correctly points out that

⁸⁵ Gallicchio, *The African American Encounter with Japan and China*, 108; Tsu, 'Getting Ideas About World Literature in China', 295.

⁸⁶ Baker, 'Translated Images of the Foreign in the Early Works of Lin Shu (1852-1924) and Pearl S. Buck (1892-1973): Accommodation and Appropriation', 106.

⁸⁷ Baker, 111-12.

equating the struggles of Black slaves with those of the Chinese migrants, as both Lin and Wei did, obliterated “many characteristics of the Chinese struggle while at the same time shedding little understanding of the brutality, violence, and destructiveness of chattel slavery in America”.⁸⁸

1.3.2 From Stowe to Haggard: Chinese colonial desires and Lin Shu’s notions of youth and masculinity

Lin Shu’s interest in using translations to advance his socio-political ideas seems not only to have emerged in his collaboration with Wei Yi on the translation of Stowe’s text but also to have been shaped by this early enterprise. In this section, I discuss the potential connection between Lin and Wei’s manipulation of the representation of the central characters of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and subsequent translations of Henry Rider Haggard’s books in which Chinese readers more than likely received their first exposure to Africa as a fictional setting. Lin was not only concerned to motivate his readers to action through comparisons that evoked indignation but also to inspire them with those that offered a vision of what Chinese people could be. Could they imagine a world where youthful Chinese imperialist heroes roamed the African landscape in search of adventure, their superiority to the native inhabitants never in

⁸⁸ Brown, ‘Blackness in Exile: W.E.B. Du Bois’ Role in the Formation of Representations of Blackness Conceptualized by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)’, 23.

question? In the explicitly racial idiom of the day, were the ‘yellow’ race destined to meet the fate of the ‘Black race’ or embrace the destiny of the ‘white race’?

Lin and Wei were seemingly dissatisfied with the title character Uncle Tom as a vehicle for their political agenda. Unable fully to discard or censure this character due to his centrality to the story, they nevertheless appear to have significantly reduced his status and refigured him as an admirable but rather ineffectual character, casting the mantle of hero instead on the runaway slave George Harris. As Martha Cheung suggests, this commences with the radical change in title:

It is true that in the preface, Lin Shu has said that he did this because the original title was lacking in elegance...But one effect which Lin Shu’s title has on the readers is that it takes their attention away from Uncle Tom, and therefore undermines the values he embodies; it also prepares the ground for George, the slave who would rather risk death than submit himself to the plight of persecution, to emerge as the real hero and the role model for the readers.⁸⁹

Among the many strategies they adopt in the translated text itself to de-emphasize Tom, Lin and Wei deny him the glory of the martyr’s death that Stowe intended and undermine his ability to inspire other slaves with his religious example. At the moment of his death in the source text (Stowe’s

⁸⁹ Cheung, ‘The Discourse of Occidentalism? Wei Yi and Lin Shu’s Treatment of Religious Material in Their Translation of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*’, 143.

climactic moment of Christian triumph), Tom's face acquires the "expression of...a conqueror" and dies "with a smile", his final words affirming the impossibility of anyone separating him "from the love of Christ".⁹⁰ When Lin and Wei's translation is rendered back into English, all of these religious sentiments are missing and Tom, elated at having had a final opportunity to talk to his master's son George Shelby, has a "coughing fit" and dies suddenly. Similarly, "the advice which Tom asks Shelby to give his [Tom's] sons is based not so much on Christian teachings as on Chinese moral and ethical values, in particular, the Confucian emphasis on personal integrity". Baker broadly concurs with Cheung's argument, adding that Tom's "fatherly advice" to Shelby in the translation is "so overblown as to make him seem pompous," his "Confucian" values "exaggerated to an almost farcical degree".⁹¹ There are a number of other examples of characters whose transformations are also no longer couched in Christian terms. For example, the slave overseers Sambo and Quimbo, who undergo a religious conversion in the source text due to the impact of Tom's example, simply achieve "an improvement in moral character" in keeping with a secular reading of the "human conscience".⁹² Baker also notes that the lengthy chapter (called 'An Evening in Uncle Tom's Cabin'), in which Stowe established Tom as the hero of the story, was reduced to a "terse paragraph" in the translation, and that the character which emerges has "little in

⁹⁰ Cheung, 135.

⁹¹ Cheung, 135.

⁹² Cheung, 134.

common with Stowe's hero".⁹³ At best, Tom's "transparent honesty and sensitivity... makes him into a lovable, but overly sentimental simpleton" in Lin and Wei's translation.⁹⁴

Ultimately, however, it may also be argued that what remains of Tom in Lin and Wei's translation is succinctly captured by Thomas F. Gossett, in his summary of post-war African American intellectual objections to a character who was no longer "seen as a Christian-martyr hero" but instead "frequently condemned as a servile, obsequious black who had been unwilling to take his own part or that of other blacks...a symbol of the black who commands no respect from others and demands no rights".⁹⁵ Despite the ironic coincidence that neither Lin and Wei nor a great many Black intellectuals found Uncle Tom's character appealing, the translators, in keeping with the general approach of other Qing reformers, never interrogated the racialist paradigm that buttressed the construction of this novel. Tom, in their scheme, was not objectionable because he embodied what would later become seen as negative racial stereotypes about Blacks in the West but because his Blackness becomes *a marker of passivity and resignation in the face of injustice and oppression*, unsuitable for emulation by the imagined Chinese reader. This was generally associated with the 'Black

⁹³ Baker, 136–39.

⁹⁴ Baker, 136.

⁹⁵ Gossett, *Uncle Tom's Cabin and American Culture*, 388.

race' in China, as indicated elsewhere, and this novel, as much through Stowe's initial construction of Tom and other Black characters as through Lin and Wei's subsequent handling of them, seems to have powerfully reinforced this stereotype. As later chapters of the present work show, this stereotype would only be meaningfully contested during the Maoist period.

Lin and Wei, having jettisoned Tom as an appropriate role model for their reading public, discovered in George Harris the ideal vehicle for their political agenda. He is young, masculine, adventurous, determined and even violent, embodying the qualities that Lin Shu would later valorise as necessary for the rejuvenation of China and that would lead him to translate the "juvenile literature" of Henry Rider Haggard.⁹⁶ Although Stowe depicted the character of George Harris in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* sympathetically, he "paled in comparison...beside Tom, who had imitated Christ in his life of service, his dedication to the spiritual life of those around him, and his sacrificial death".⁹⁷ However, Stowe's *romantic racialism* enabled Harris to at once represent and be an exception to his race.⁹⁸ As Jeremy Larnier suggests in summarizing the

⁹⁶ Kwan, 'Rejuvenating China', 37.

⁹⁷ Baker, 127.

⁹⁸ According to George M. Fredrickson, antebellum abolitionists often subscribed to a form of *romantic racialism*, affirming that Blacks and whites were different in "temperament and psychology" with the former characteristically more spiritual and less aggressive than the latter (see Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914*, 125–26). For romantic racialists like Stowe, "the alleged peculiarities of blacks did not sanction a belief in their inferiority or justify enslaving them or discriminating against them" (see Fredrickson, *Racism*, 154).

crux of many Black intellectuals' objections to Stowe's depiction of "black dignity" as a function of Tom's "Christian submission", Harris is offensive to the same commentators because his rebelliousness is derived purely from his white genetic heritage or, as the character himself expresses it, the "blood" of "the hot and hasty Saxon".⁹⁹ As she stated in her preface to the novel, Stowe wanted mercy and goodwill, based on "Christian principles of brotherhood", to replace the "misunderstanding and contempt" that had always defined the "Anglo-Saxon" response to Africans.¹⁰⁰ Denied Stowe's Christian ennoblement, the Blacks in the translated text had few redeeming collective features, except their child-like natures (as epitomized by Tom himself), while Harris was left with precisely the features that, according to Baker, "articulated a new model for heroism for emulation by their [the translators'] late Qing contemporaries".¹⁰¹ While the extent to which Lin and Wei were fully aware of Stowe's racial hierarchy among slaves is unknown, it is likely that Harris became an *exception to his race* rather than the romantic racist embodiment of its unacknowledged possibilities in their eyes. The translators, among many interventions in Harris's representation, inserted his evaluation of his own race into the text of his final letter as if to distinguish him from them, a blatant departure from the source text and almost certainly from Stowe's intention:

⁹⁹ Cheung, 145.

¹⁰⁰ Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin or, Life among the Lowly*, 1.

¹⁰¹ Baker, 120.

At present, black people have deteriorated into a base race. Everyone spurns them. I am very ashamed of this.¹⁰²

Where Stowe's Harris expresses an eagerness to explore the latent potential of his race, Lin and Wei's character is hesitant about ascribing any positive qualities to them, the above statements almost constituting a displacement of Stowe's romantic racialism with the Chinese strain of Social Darwinism outlined earlier. The reasons for having Harris write this in his letter, however, were not consciously to reaffirm a Social Darwinist reading but rather most likely because the 'irredeemable' nature of the Black race was meant to represent the 'Blackness' of the Chinese who were being treated just like them by whites. In Wei's preface, he invoked the image of a "toppled cart", representing the Blacks in the antebellum United States, who were to serve as a warning for the cart tottering behind — the Chinese.¹⁰³ The translators were in a sense attempting a literary exorcism of their race's impotence in the face of humiliation at home and abroad by conflating them with Blacks. However, as will be illustrated below, Lin and Wei were content to endorse and embellish Stowe's descriptions of Harris himself, thereby elevating him at the expense of his race. This exceptionalism also allowed Lin and Wei to avoid confronting the problem of his Blackness.

¹⁰² Baker, 168.

¹⁰³ Baker, 111.

It is reasonable to assert that Lin and Wei went to great lengths in their attempt to ‘capture’ George Harris in a manner that would resonate with their readers. Baker devotes a substantial section of her chapter on Lin and Wei’s translation to an invaluable exposition of how they accomplish this.¹⁰⁴ Crucially, the translators omitted the character’s spiritual journey towards “a deeper commitment to Christ”; he thus emerges as even more strident and daring, reminiscent of legendary Chinese warrior figures from traditional adventure novels. Lin and Wei accentuated his “martial” bearing as he towers above the puny “insect prey” who have been pursuing him late in the novel, a metaphor (absent from the source text) for Harris’s white pursuers. Where Stowe focused on Harris’s capacity for despair at the close of her introductory discussion of him, Lin and Wei’s character never reveals personal weaknesses; his despair, as recorded in his final letter, is directed rather at whether anyone of his race will support him in his endeavours to “reclaim” their collective “nationhood”, again seemingly emphasizing the contrast between him and his people. The supposed inability of his people to unite as a precondition for the achievement of nationhood, noted by Lin’s reformer peers, appears to be implicit here. This is markedly different from the optimistic tone of the letter in the source text.

¹⁰⁴ Baker, 153–71.

Ultimately, these alterations in the representation of George Harris amount to a skilful *sinicizing* of his character. Baker states that Stowe's character "ceases to exist", having been transformed into "an unabashed portrait of a late Qing visionary" by the end of the novel.¹⁰⁵ While Baker is correct in identifying the sinicizing impulse of the translators, I argue that the transformation of Harris must be seen in the context both of particular notions of youth and masculinity as an antidote to China's collective malaise that were circulating at the time and in the context of Lin Shu's subsequent translation activity. Following such a reading, I propose that Lin and Wei transformed Harris not into a late Qing intellectual but rather into a prototypical patriotic Chinese youth (although these could overlap).¹⁰⁶ As Uganda Sze Pui Kwan indicates, Lin Shu was preoccupied with the role of youth and virility in addressing China's situation, often admonishing young males to "cultivate a life of courage and stay away from habits that would corrupt them".¹⁰⁷ His rejection of Tom, the vehicle through whom Stowe had popularized a conception of the Black race's essentially feminine characteristics, may also have been based on his objections not to traditional Chinese culture as a whole but to a benign and feminine strain in its

¹⁰⁵ Baker, 168.

¹⁰⁶ Among the possible inspirations for this may have been the ubiquitous Liang Qichao's 1900 article called "Shaonian Zhongguo shuo" ('Ode to Juvenile China') in which he first placed the young Chinese male at the centre of the discourse of national rejuvenation and sought to combat notions of China as an old and moribund civilization (see Kwan, 42–43). Interestingly, Liang also inaugurated a new strain of nationalistic rhetoric during this period in which benighted overseas Chinese labourers were refigured as "national colonial heroes" and as the exceptions to the "rule of the extinction of the unfit"; this shift from "anti-colonialism to a celebration of colonialism" was reinforced by certain "literary and fictional writings about post-apocalyptic societies where the Chinese once again found their proper role of leadership and dominance over other races". (for a full discussion, see Tsu, 'Extinction and Adventures on the Chinese Diasporic Frontier', 247–48).

¹⁰⁷ Kwan, 'Rejuvenating China', 37–38.

ethos.¹⁰⁸ This may also partially account for the cleavage between Harris and his race in the translation, which was not present in the source text, the implication being that the extent to which the Chinese were feminine and passive is precisely the degree to which they resemble Black slaves.

The attempts to remould George Harris's character into a suitable vessel for Lin and Wei's political aspirations impacted not only the descriptions of the character but also his written and spoken words. Although Baker shows that Lin incorporated ideas that he had mentioned in his peritexts into Harris's speeches in a number of cases throughout the text, she asserts that the "zenith" of these interventions was Harris's final letter. At several points, besides the complete omission of the Christian aspects highlighted by both Baker and Cheung, Lin's Harris magnifies the injustices suffered by his people in an effort to stir Chinese readers, returns to the subject of those who have a country and those who do not, and gives voice to a sense of desperation and isolation that Lin, and others like him, when confronted with what they saw as apathy in the face of injustice, most certainly felt.¹⁰⁹ The sinicized Harris's plan to "protect our race" seems to have come directly out of Lin's preface, while his statements regarding his desire to "stir up and reinvigorate the morale of [his] nation's citizens" and

¹⁰⁸ For more information on these feminine characteristics, see Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914*, 113–15.

¹⁰⁹ Cheung, 136; Baker, 168–71.

“cast off the insults of foreigners” seem far removed from the world of Stowe’s antebellum American readers.

The unabashedly virile version of George Harris, unfettered by Stowe’s religiosity, that emerges in the Chinese translation appears to have been a forerunner of host of masculine heroes in Lin’s publications as his translation activity continued to display an emphasis on positive role models for young readers. Kwan asserts that Lin found many such figures in Haggard’s “juvenile literature” and that this accounted for what seemed to be Lin’s anomalous focus on works by a writer deemed by many to be “second-rate”.¹¹⁰ Haggard’s heroes are typically young, “physically strong, virile and fearless”, and the author often explicitly indicated that his stories were aimed at a juvenile male reading audience. These characters served an analogous role in the Victorian context that Lin wished them to fulfil in China: they were meant to mould these readers into the ideal adult male of the time who was imagined to be “courageous, industrious, enterprising, and independent”, as well as free of the corrupting and emasculating influences of “idleness and luxury”. As Kwan notes, the prefaces and epilogues to Lin’s translations of Haggard often overtly emphasize that he wished the Chinese to emulate the bravery and virility of the characters.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Lin Shu translated fourteen of Haggard’s novels between 1904 and 1910 (see Kwan, 35).

¹¹¹ Kwan, 37.

However, Haggard's novels were more than just entertaining adventure stories that encouraged an ethos of Victorian manliness; modern critics frequently refer to them as "ideological tools to persuade young readers to pursue a career in the empire".¹¹² Haggard believed that it was Britain's mission "to conquer and hold in subjection" what he perceived to be the inferior peoples "not from thirst of conquest but for the sake of law, justice, and order" and his works thus implicitly and explicitly rationalized imperial domination.¹¹³ Lin Shu had clearly divined the role that juvenile literature was playing in the British Empire and came to believe that "representations of colonial aggression could move Chinese readers both to emulate and to resist their foreign invaders".¹¹⁴ He did not therefore evince any objections to the violence to which colonised peoples were subjected in some of these stories or their legitimization of white racial domination; constructing the world as a site of Darwinian struggles between the races as many of his contemporaries did, he appeared to perceive colonisation as a logical outcome of the lack of fitness of the subjugated peoples.¹¹⁵ This particular attitude to the colonisation of Africa may have had a lasting impact on future paratextual constructions of the colonial activities in Africa as the castigation of the imperialist enterprise in Africa remained curiously absent from Chinese paratextual commentaries until the Maoist era, despite intense

¹¹² Kwan, 36.

¹¹³ Brantlinger, *Victorian Literature and Postcolonial Studies*, 136.

¹¹⁴ Venuti, *The Scandals of Translation: Towards an Ethics of Difference*, 180.

¹¹⁵ Kwan, 41–42.

criticism of this enterprise in other contexts. Despite his early note of desperation at what he saw as Chinese apathy in his translation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Kwan insists that Lin never placed the Chinese in the category of the other peoples confronting the imperialist onslaught. They were exceptional, and would ultimately triumph, if they took the appropriate actions. Their 'blackness' could be dispelled in a way that his essentialist reading of other non-white groups did not permit.

Kwan shows that Lin grasped the ideological import of Haggard's works, noting that Lin praised the courage of Haggard's white colonial heroes and their ability to subdue a territory where millions of people lived as well as to manipulate the 'savage' Blacks into fighting each other while assuming the role of mediators.¹¹⁶ Through Lin's renderings of such works as *Allan Quatermain* (published as "The sorrow of Africa" in 1905), *Nada The Lily* ("The wolfman in devil mountain" in 1905), *The People of the Mist* (1906), and *King Solomon's Mines* ("The skeleton in the stalactite grotto" in 1908), Chinese readers would also have encountered African characters — Haggard's "magnificent" yet savage Zulus in particular — for the first time and whether Lin manipulated their representation as he had in the case of Harris merits further investigation.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ Kwan, 41–42.

¹¹⁷ Brantlinger, *Taming Cannibals*, 169.

Overall, Lin's translation oeuvre may have confirmed for his Chinese readers that colonisation is indeed the proper activity of superior races, inviting them to identify with the victors and not the victims, while Lin himself seems to have transitioned from lamenting the plight of the Chinese in his translation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to offering his readers vicarious gratification for their desire to recover a sense of racial and cultural superiority.

1.3.3 The afterlives of *Uncle Tom Cabin* in the Republican era

The notion of the Black slave, as indicated elsewhere, originated well before the Chinese translation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. However, the impact of Lin Shu and Wei Yi's translation was such that the figure of the Black slave seems to have been foregrounded in the Chinese imaginary, perhaps especially because of its deployment by the translators, as a way to talk about the Chinese people themselves. It is not surprising, therefore, that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had a number of incarnations in China, besides the re-publications of the original translation. The material afterlife of the book across the period with which this chapter is concerned gestures towards its continued relevance in shaping the discourses around Blackness, Africa and the African diaspora; its influence will be highlighted in later sections of this thesis as well. The discursive shifts that are apparent in selection of works in this section, when taking their periodization into account, also suggest that the conjunction of the politics of indignation and

the Black slave as a proxy for Chinese oppression that characterized Lin and Wei's translation may have disappeared by the 1930s, a point to which I return in subsequent sections.

One of the most distinctive manifestations of the impact of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was in the world of Chinese drama, an artistic form that was also revolutionized and deployed as a tool for social reform at the turn of the last century.¹¹⁸ As Shao-ling Yu notes, Stowe's story inspired three different dramatic interpretations, their chronology suggestive of the extraordinary longevity of the story in China and its unflagging resonance. Zeng Xiaogu (1907), Ouyang Yuqian (1957), and Nick Rongju Yu (2007) all produced their own versions, each saturated with the concerns of its particular historical moment.¹¹⁹ Zeng's production, the earliest afterlife of Lin and Wei's version of Stowe's novel, was staged in Japan, a destination that had attracted at least seven thousand Chinese students by 1907, many of whom would go on to form the core of the dominant intellectual and cultural movements of subsequent decades in China.¹²⁰ Through the course of a deeply ambivalent relationship with Japan, Shih suggests that these youths absorbed aspects of Japan's modernization narrative that would

¹¹⁸ Liu, 'The Impact of Shinpa on Early Chinese Huaju', 344.

¹¹⁹ Yu, "'Cry to Heaven': A Play to Celebrate One Hundred Years of Chinese Spoken Drama by Nick Rongjun Yu", 2. Zeng Xiaogu was an actor and pioneer of modern Chinese theatre. Ouyang Yuqian was a well-known Chinese playwright and actor who performed in the 1907 production of the play and later penned his own version. Yu Rongjun is an award-winning playwright and director based in Shanghai.

¹²⁰ Liu, 'The Impact of Shinpa on Early Chinese Huaju', 344.

have a profound influence on their own notions of modernity and how China was to achieve it.¹²¹ At the same time, many of these students felt a keen sense of “racialized self-consciousness”, having experienced racism directly at the hands of their Japanese hosts as well as through disparaging representations of, and commentaries on, the Chinese in the Japanese media.¹²² Against this socio-political and intellectual backdrop, the play was first staged by a Chinese student organization called the Spring Willow Society. The play was named after and self-consciously based on Lin and Wei’s translation, thereby also foregrounding the Black slaves collectively rather than the character of Tom. Since the script itself no longer survives, it is largely impossible to tell what sort of interventions were enacted by the playwright and others. Yu states that the play “was used to reflect the abjection of China in her anticolonial struggle at the beginning of the twentieth century”, thereby suggesting that the production appears also to have drawn on a politics of indignation through connecting the treatment of the slaves with that meted out to China as a collective entity by the imperialist powers.¹²³ Although Yu mentions that the lot of the Chinese migrants in the United States had been a concern in Lin and Wei’s translation as a way of framing the agenda of the play, how this was conveyed in the production is unclear. Much like Lin and Wei’s translation, Christian elements

¹²¹ Shih, *The Lure of the Modern*, 143.

¹²² Shih, 76.

¹²³ Yu, ““Cry to Heaven”: A Play to Celebrate One Hundred Years of Chinese Spoken Drama by Nick Rongjun Yu”, 2–3.

in the play were downplayed. George Harris's heroism was foregrounded through the ending of the play in which he escapes after killing his persecutors and reunites with his wife Eliza. Victor Mair adds an additional dimension in suggesting that while "the American founding fathers' conception of equality" could be used as "an argument against the Confucian tradition", early Chinese dramatists were "nevertheless attracted to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* for its powerful critique of black slavery and for the subsequent liberal critique exposing the hypocrisy of the founding principles of the United States".¹²⁴ This observation suggests the nascence of an alternative use of the Black slave's predicament as early as 1907 that I return to below in the discussion of the performance of the play in 1932. According to Tian Han, the play was full of patriotic defiance and was useful as a rallying call among Chinese students and the Chinese expatriate community.¹²⁵ The production is also important in that its execution and technical innovations represent a departure from previous Chinese dramatic conventions and thus the birth of a new dramatic form: *huaju* or 'spoken drama'. Its positive reception is also suggested by the fact that it was highly acclaimed in the Japanese press and later re-staged in Shanghai.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ Mair, *The Columbia History of Chinese Literature*, 849. Attacks on Confucianism would become one of the defining characteristics of the May Fourth Movement over a decade later. This movement will be discussed in the next section.

¹²⁵ Tian, 'Tan *Heinu hen*' [About 'The Regret of the Black Slaves'], 3.

cf. ...首先是由于剧本内容充满了民族反抗的感情，使它在当时留学生界和华侨社会起了很大的唤醒作用。Tian Han was a prominent Chinese playwright and critic.

¹²⁶ Liu, 'The Impact of Shinpa on Early Chinese *Huaju*', 344–45.

In a preface to the 1962 publication of Ouyang's play, Tian Han also recorded that the play was later performed in the Chinese Central Soviet Area (a stronghold of the CCP in the years before they came to power) near the Jiangxi-Fujian border in 1932. In keeping with the tone of the ideologically fraught era — between the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution — within which he commented on the history of the story of Uncle Tom in China, he averred that the production deepened the knowledge of American imperialism's racial discrimination among the cadres and audiences of the Central Soviet.¹²⁷ He also claimed that the play had exerted a certain influence on the Xinhai Revolution in 1911 and during the initial period of the agrarian revolution in the 1930s.¹²⁸ It is difficult to evaluate the accuracy of his claims but it may be that the play, much as the book had done, had played a role in galvanizing the revolutionary forces that eventually toppled the Qing dynasty. The comments regarding the Central Soviet production are significant as they are seemingly the first reference to the convergence of Blackness and the ideological agenda of the CCP as early as the 1930s with the caveat that Tian's attempt to enfold this staging into a retrospective teleology was related to the needs of his own

¹²⁷ Tian, 3–4. cf. 到了一九三二年，在中央苏区的瑞金也演出过这个戏，使苏区干部和群众加深了对美帝国主义的認識。应该说这个戏在我国辛亥革命前后和土地革命初期都起过了一定影响。

¹²⁸ The Xinhai Revolution is another name for China's first twentieth-century revolution that overthrew the Qing Dynasty. Law pointedly adds that "ideologies of racial hierarchy, race war and the need for racial domination by the Han" were at the heart of this revolution and how the play may have functioned in this context certainly warrants further investigation (see Law, *Red Racisms*, 103). As Zarrow notes, "it was in the Jiangxi Soviet that the CCP "experimented" with a mix of policies that allowed it to survive: peasant-based guerrilla war; land reform to create popular support; professional army troops; and a willingness to abandon the cities indefinitely to "counter-revolutionary" forces. The agrarian revolution is used here to describe the initiatives related to land reform (see Zarrow, *China in War and Revolution, 1895 - 1949*, 279).

historical moment.¹²⁹ Nonetheless, it may be that discursive shifts around the issues of Blackness and Africa that would become more apparent in the early years of CCP rule after 1949 were anticipated during this period. At face value, Tian's comments suggest that rather than deploying the Black slaves to act as tropes for the oppression of the Chinese, the priority in performing this play in the context of the Jiangxi Soviet was reveal the brutality of racial discrimination as practised by the imperialist oppressor. Blacks were now victims in their own right rather than proxies for Chinese migrants and the politics of indignation may have been muted in this unique setting in which distinctive ideologies were being formulated that had, as yet, not suffused the urban intellectual milieu, despite the left-wing sympathies of many metropolitan intellectuals. However, Tian's commentary should be also understood within the context of the widely-acknowledged role he had in "orienting the drama world toward leftist theatre under the influence of the Chinese Communist Party...whose ideology called for promoting a class-oriented 'proletarian drama' that would depict the unjust oppressions of the working class".¹³⁰ The collision of the 'Black slave' with the working class topos that was likely to have occurred during this production may have necessitated a muting or ostensible abandonment of certain stereotypes

¹²⁹ Goldman lists Tian Han as one of the members of Zhou Yang's clique who enforced ideological conformity in the artistic world but who themselves were targeted for "public attack" during the Cultural Revolution in 1966 (see Goldman, *Literary Dissent in Communist China*, 276).

¹³⁰ Mair, *The Columbia History of Chinese Literature*, 859.

regarding Blacks but this remains speculative and the racialized discourses already described continued to prevail outside the Central Soviet.

Another example of both the longevity of the story and the vitality of the Black slave in the Chinese imaginary late into the period with which this chapter is concerned is the 2012 re-publication by Dolphin Books of a primary school reader first published by the Commercial Press in 1934. The text is a retelling of the story of Uncle Tom for children that was published as part of a series of children's books called the *Xiao xuesheng wenku* ('Primary school student library') in the 1930s. This series, according to the blurb of the book, had an enormous influence on Chinese society.¹³¹ Both the blurb (written recently) and the anonymous editor's preface (written at the time of original publication) note that the book's title was translated as *Heinu hun* ('The soul of the Black slave') and also provide a direct translation of Stowe's original title into Chinese.

Neither peritext attempts to explain this choice of title but it seems reasonable to speculate that the use of 'Black slave' in the title would perhaps have associated it more easily with Lin and Wei's celebrated translation whereas, unlike in English-speaking contexts, the use of 'Uncle Tom' would probably not have been recognized. In this respect, it is possible that the sheer popularity of Lin

¹³¹ Stowe, *Heinu hun* [The soul of the Black slave (*Uncle Tom's Cabin*)]. cf. 《小学生文库》是上世纪三十年代商务印书馆出版的一套文库性质的小学生读物...当时产生了巨大的社会影响。

and Wei's translation foreclosed other translation choices for the title, despite the fact that the children's version was a new vernacular Chinese adaptation by Xu Yingchang and an unknown translator (whereas Lin Shu had written in classical Chinese).¹³² It is also not clear what the source of the story was as there are significant differences between the narrative and Lin and Wei's translation. For example, the children's story focuses on Tom and completely ignores George Harris. The blurb mentions "honest, simple and good-natured Tom, angelic Eva, (and) the youthful George Shelby who is filled with a sense of justice".¹³³ Indeed, it is the young white master George who strikes Tom's final owner, the cruel Simon Legree, responsible for ordering his overseers to beat Tom to death.¹³⁴ The children's text ends with George freeing the slaves on his farm after an emotional final scene with the dying Tom and a prayer in which he promises to end the suffering of the Black slaves.¹³⁵ A brief biography of Stowe and her publications is given at the beginning of the text, and the gist of the book is summarized concisely as an account of the conditions of abuse suffered by the Black slaves in the American South that teaches the reader to

¹³² Based on the large numbers of his works that have been republished over the years, it is clear that Xu Yingchang was a famous editor of children's books on a variety of subjects. Biographical information on him is very limited. In addition, 'Gan Tang' is listed as a translator on the cover of the book. No information is available on anyone of that name and so it seems likely that it was a penname. A number of native Chinese interlocutors have suggested as much in personal conversations with me.

¹³³ Stowe, *Heinu hun* [The soul of the Black slave (*Uncle Tom's Cabin*)]. cf. ...敦厚、善良的汤姆，天使般的伊发，年轻而充满正义感的乔治..."

¹³⁴ Stowe, 81–82.

¹³⁵ Stowe, 79–84.

sympathize with the “hearts” of the Black slaves.¹³⁶ The biography also notes that the American Civil War was fought over this issue. The text seems to conform to Stowe’s original intentions for the book much more closely than Lin and Wei’s translation and, although the subtext of the cruelty of imperialism is still present, allows white characters to display admirable qualities while doing little to challenge the stereotypes associated with Black slaves more broadly. While the politics of indignation is not deployed in this text, the Black slave topos is certainly operational, despite the relatively sympathetic treatment of Tom and other Black characters. The fate of the slaves, after all, remains in the hands of the white characters, which implicitly denies them agency in their own liberation and inculcates the familiar stereotypes of Black passivity in young readers.

While the politics of indignation that Lin and Wei had inaugurated had waned by the 1930s, the Black slave topos had been consolidated across multiple discursive contexts in no small measure due to the lasting influence of their translation. It now functioned overtly and covertly as a shorthand for the abject racial Other who lacks the consciousness to enact its own liberation. When interest began to stir in the translation of Black literature itself, the Black slave

¹³⁶ ‘Zhuzhe xiaozhuan’ [Author’s Profile]. cf. 一八五一年，她在一份报纸名叫《国家的纪元》的发表她的《汤姆叔的茅屋》... 现译名《黑奴魂》。描写美国南部虐待黑奴的情形，教人读了要油然而生出一个表同情于那些黑奴的心来。末了，南北美味这房奴问题，发生了一次大战争...

topos became a readily available heuristic, a hopelessly inadequate and yet essential entry point for Chinese writer-translators in the inter-war years.

Chapter 2

Abject trajectories: Black literature and the Black modern in the Republican era

2.1 ‘Disinviting’ comparisons: the end of indignation, Chinese literary modernity, and the invisible Black modern

As the last chapter suggests, the deployment of the Black slave as a trope for Chinese oppression was no longer as prominent by the 1930s. The reasons for the seeming disappearance of this strategy may be traced to changing perceptions of comparisons between Blacks and Chinese that were related to the emergent Chinese racial identity as well as to profound shifts in the relationship between the most prominent intellectuals of the new era in the literary/translation sphere specifically and the different guises in which the West functioned within this sphere. In investigating these developments, I draw on and critique aspects of Irene Eber’s ground-breaking book *Voices from Afar: Modern Chinese Writers on Oppressed Peoples and Their Literature* (1980), the first-ever study to explore the impact on the Chinese literary world of the translation of what may be termed *oppressed people’s literatures*. I contest Eber’s inclusion of Black American literature under this rubric since the evidence suggests that Black literature was largely ignored by the Chinese literary establishment until later than she suggests. I argue that such attention as

it did garner was motivated by the growing involvement of the literary establishment in left-wing activities associated with the international socialist world. Even so, the most powerful cultural mediators continued to neglect Black literature and those figures who wrote about or translated it may be regarded as relatively marginal. One such figure was the translator and editor Zhao Jingshen whose attempt to introduce 'African' literature to Chinese readers is the subject of the next section.

It is important to recall at the outset that the politics of indignation first emerged at the turn of the twentieth century as Chinese readers were forced to grapple with the possibility that their compatriots were no better than Black slaves, a direct comparison intended to shock and offend the reader whose cultural understanding of Blackness and perhaps emergent grasp of the racialized paradigm displacing the Confucian cosmological order had primed him or her to perceive Blackness as inherently contemptible. The present work has already presented evidence of the astonishing and singular impact of Lin and Wei's translation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* with regard to the intensification of the politics of indignation and its multiple deployments both within and beyond the literary sphere. By the 1920s, however, the intellectual milieu had altered considerably and, as mentioned earlier, a Chinese identity with racial hierarchism at its core was becoming paradigmatic. Where the earlier generation

of intellectuals had incorporated discussions of literature into their socio-political commentary, it is also at this juncture that writing about literature no longer necessarily addressed societal or political issues in the same manner. Whereas those who produced socio-political commentary could forcefully castigate the imperial West's colonisation and exploitation of China, those who functioned as the driving forces of China's literary revolution were constrained by their desire to emulate the West, always with the notion inherited from the Qing reformers that the modernization of literature was intimately linked to that of the entire society. In response to the sense of ongoing crisis, the dominant 'May Fourth' intellectual faction of the early 1920s prioritized "the radical introduction of 'new learning'" which encompassed, as César Guardé-Paz notes, "Western values related to democracy, morality and science that were perceived by some intellectuals as being diametrically hostile to the Confucian *mores* that defined Chinese culture *per se*".¹ As Shih puts it, "the urgency of criticizing feudalism and forwarding Westernization often displaced the immediate need to confront and criticize colonial domination" and the concept of "the West" became 'split' "between the metropolitan West (Western culture in the West) and the colonial West (the culture of Western colonisers in China)".² This did not mean, however, that the writers and translators of this

¹ Guardé-Paz, *Modern Chinese Literature, Lin Shu and the Reformist Movement*, 2. The 'May Fourth Movement', in its narrow sense, is named after the iconic student protest against Japanese imperialism and the terms of the Treaty of Versailles (which had ceded German territory in China to Japan) that took place on that date in Beijing in 1919 and spread to other cities (see Mitter, *A Bitter Revolution*, 18).

² Shih, *The Lure of the Modern*, 36.

intellectual movement did not evince an interest in oppression and imperialism; they were, in fact, profoundly interested in these issues but their desire for Western modernity may have hindered their engagement with non-imperialist literatures. At the same time, the multiple deployments of the Black slave trope across a variety of disciplines preserved it as a generalized topos but, given the aforementioned changes, made it less palatable where it was implicated in direct comparisons between Blacks and Chinese, especially against the backdrop of ‘scientific’ discourses in which the racial boundaries between Chinese and others were actively being staked out. While developments in America confronting the African American community continued to compel the attention of some writers of socio-political commentaries and Black American political movements were gradually acknowledged and discussed from the mid-1920s onwards, the most powerful mediators in the translation/literary sphere remained disengaged (wilfully or otherwise) as far as Black literature was concerned, despite, as will be shown below, the much greater concern of many of these figures with oppressed people’s literatures than had previously been the case.³ As an emanation of the imagined racial inferiority of Blacks, Black

³ Eber offers a useful summary of the socio-political commentaries on the conditions under which African Americans lived that began to appear from the late 1920s onwards but did not, as I have argued elsewhere, reflect a literary interest. She states that these commentators focused on “the condition of slavery, the emancipation of slaves, the status of Blacks in America prior to and after World War 1, and the various movements launched to improve their condition” (see Eber, *Voices from Afar*, 29–32). These articles began to appear in 1926 and were published in the widely-circulated *Dongfang zazhi* (“Eastern Miscellany”), a journal that covered a wide range of topics and was not primarily literary in its focus (see Chen, ‘*Xiaoshuo yuebao* (1921–1931) as a Cultural Mediator of Small Literatures in China’, 121). The commentators included the noted geographer Ge Suicheng, the editor and journalist Zuo Lin, the economist Wu Yugan, and the science writer You Xiong, none of whom were prominent literary figures and about whom, with the exception of Ge,

literature could not even be said to be lacking in status in China; it was simply irrelevant and therefore invisible — until Zhao Jingshen attempted to incorporate it into his collection of profiles of literature from abroad in the late 1920s.

It must be acknowledged that Zhao's project occurred during a period of unprecedented interest in the translation of literatures that had never been considered mainstream in China, and his contribution needs to be contextualized properly with this in mind. As Eber asserts, figures who would become prominent members of the new generation of Chinese writer-translators began to transcend an interest in the oppression of others that had hitherto been based simply on the extent to which it could illuminate China's predicament. The first step in this direction came in 1909 when, in contrast with the utopian visions in certain works of the late Qing discussed in the last chapter and the relatively benign readings of imperialist literature of figures such as Lin Shu and Liang Qichao, "a formally expressed literary concern with the experiences of perishing nations and ethnicities appeared" in the form of the first two volumes of what was intended to be a multi-volume anthology of translations called *Yuwai xiaoshuo ji* ("A Collection of Fiction from Abroad").⁴ The

biographical information is quite scarce. These articles may have contributed to a slightly greater interest in translating Black American literature in the 1930s (see my discussion on p.131-132 of this chapter).

⁴ Tsu, 'World Literature and National Literature(s)', 165–66.

brothers who translated this collection would go on to become towering figures in the New Culture Movement and Chinese literary history: essayist and leading intellectual Zhou Zuoren and his brother Zhou Shuren, better known as Lu Xun, often called the ‘father’ of modern Chinese literature. While the collection is revolutionary in that it is the first time works of non-imperialist Western nations were published in Chinese, it must be emphasized that only ten of the twenty-eight works originated from what may be called oppressed people’s literatures (such as those by Eastern European writers) and none of these were non-European.⁵ The project was a commercial failure but Lawrence Venuti and Irene Eber concur on the fact that it represented a turning point in the historical trajectory of Chinese literature, the significance of which would only be felt during the May Fourth period and the literary revolution after 1919.⁶ Therefore, although these literatures increasingly attracted the attention of certain May Fourth intellectuals from about 1915 onwards in a manner entirely distinct from earlier thinkers, Western and Russian literatures still accounted for the bulk of translation activity, and works by Black writers continued to be neglected.⁷

⁵ Eber, *Voices from Afar*, 10.

⁶ Eber, 10; Venuti, *The Scandals of Translation: Towards an Ethics of Difference*, 186.

⁷ Cai, ‘Ershi shijichu dui “ruoxiao minzu” wenxuede jieshao’ [The introduction of “small and weak nation” literature at the beginning of the twentieth century], 33. cf. 笔者收集了《新青年》1915 创刊至 1921 年间所有翻译作品，其中 20 篇来自苏联，32 篇来自英、法、日，31 篇来自“弱小民族”。表面上看似乎少于英、法等国，但纵观历史上对于外国文学的译介，强大民族作品始终是主流。[The writer has listed all the translated works published from the inaugural edition of ‘New Youth’ in 1915 until 1921. Twenty of these were from the Soviet Union and thirty-two were from England, France and Japan while those from ‘small and weak nations’ accounted for thirty-one. On the surface, there appear to be fewer of the latter group of translations compared with those of England, France and the others but a survey of the translation history of foreign works reveals that the literature of powerful nations has always been predominant.]

The political status of a particular nation or minority as a fellow victim of oppression was sufficient perhaps to facilitate discussion of it and its circumstances in socio-political commentaries — but the translation of its literature was contingent on additional specifically literary requirements, central among them being whether the nation’s literary scene could be said to have undergone a renaissance. As Eber suggests, there were those among the May Fourth generation who looked back to the European Renaissance and noted the importance of the abandonment of Latin and the development of literatures in vernacular languages, while others focused on what they saw as “nineteenth-century national awakening among oppressed peoples in Europe” which “underscored the political fact of national assertion and literary productivity in both nineteenth-century Europe and twentieth-century China”.⁸ The latter group viewed the translation of oppressed people’s literatures as crucial to the development of “a totally new or renewed language, linguistically, culturally and discursively” which was thought to be able to “trigger the birth of a New China”.⁹ Since oppressed people’s literatures “were often in their original languages” and were “meant to be read by a broad audience”, those who wrote

⁸ Eber, 22–23.

⁹ Xie, ‘Translating Modernity Towards Translating China’, 145. This encapsulates the central objective of the so-called New Culture Movement as it related to literature. The proponents of this movement argued that modernization “demanded a new written language and a new literature that was accessible to the broad masses not just the intellectual elite”. The founding of the journal *Xin qingnian* (‘New Youth’) in 1915 is acknowledged as its starting point and it involved a number of the central figures of both the Chinese literary and political worlds. The May Fourth movement formed part of the intellectual ferment of the New Culture era. (see Ying, *Historical Dictionary of Modern Chinese Literature*, 147–49).

them often experimented with “new uses of language and popular speech”.¹⁰

This could also be construed as a form of literary modernism with the modernization of the written language at its core. Furthermore, the writers of such literatures were “patriotic men and women” as well as “individuals whose primary concern was the fate of their people as an entity and as a people with an identity”. As Eber avers, the literature of oppressed peoples would come to confirm for certain Chinese writers what their own elevated mission should be as well as the catalytic role that literature was thought to have in social, cultural and political change.

Based on my findings that the first stirrings of interest in Black writers only emerged towards the close of the 1920s, I contest aspects of Irene Eber’s periodization. Despite Eber’s claim in her section on the 1920s that “the poets of the Harlem Renaissance were known and their poetry, such as that of Langston Hughes, was translated”, her own chronology records a Hughes poem as first appearing in 1934 and cites no translation output prior to this.¹¹ By contrast, her book reveals that a significant number of the Polish, Yiddish and Irish works had already been rendered in Chinese by the mid-1920s.¹² Eber suggests that the writers of the four literatures that she presents (Polish, Irish,

¹⁰ Eber, xii.

¹¹ Eber, 130.

¹² Eber, 41.

Yiddish and Black) all considered their respective literary scenes to have undergone some sort of flowering or renaissance by the 1920s. Although she makes the general observation that Black writings were the least translated of the four in China, Eber, through juxtaposing the various literary renaissances associated with the four literatures, creates the impression that they were perceived as equivalent within the Chinese literary sphere.¹³ The 1920s were the height of the Harlem Renaissance, but Chinese writer-translators, in the midst of their own supposed literary awakening, did not appear to be drawing any inspiration or technical lessons from it. In reality, Black American literature, as well as the literatures of Africa, were almost entirely invisible during the May Fourth period; ‘South African’ literature, as represented by translations of selected stories from white writer Olive Schreiner’s *Dreams* by Zhou Zuoren, would make its debut in the Chinese literary world through its appearance in *Xin qingnian* magazine, one of the pioneering publications in the translation of oppressed people’s literature, although, as I indicate below, these stories may not have been chosen out of any concern with oppressed peoples.¹⁴

Black literature, no matter its provenance, cannot therefore be included in the category of oppressed people’s writings during the 1920s and this hints at what

¹³ Eber, xi.

¹⁴ Zhang, ‘Yizhe zixu’ [Translator’s preface], 2–3. Zhang referred to Zhou Zuoren as “Qiming xiansheng”.

other contextual factors in the incipient paratextual framing of Zhao Jingshen's first Black literary history seem to confirm: a *denial of the coevalness* of Black literary modernism with those of both imperialist and non-imperialist modernisms.¹⁵ As the previous chapter suggested, the politics of indignation seemed to wane just as the May Fourth movement was gathering momentum in the early 1920s; the investment of these intellectuals in the new racial identity and their desire to emulate the West appears to have made direct comparisons with Black slaves problematic. While socio-political commentaries continued to discuss the circumstances of a wide array of 'oppressed peoples', and many writer-translators were interested in translating and learning from the writers of the nations with whom they felt some kinship, their desire for literary modernity seems to have mostly precluded Black writers, despite the fact that the Chinese literary renaissance coincided with a great outpouring of creativity in the Harlem Renaissance. The latter movement, and the literary modernism it represented, were entirely invisible in the Chinese literary sphere of the 1920s and would only achieve limited recognition in the subsequent decade.

¹⁵ See Fabian, *Time and the Other*, 31. I borrow this phrase from Fabian who defined it as the "persistent and systematic tendency to place the referents(s) of anthropology in a Time other than the present of the producer of anthropological discourse". For the purposes of this discussion, it simply means that the Black literature could not be embraced as fully modern as Black subjects remained overwhelmingly outside of historical time. Moreover, any need to address or reformulate this situation was not widely recognized, particularly in the Chinese literary sphere in which the translation of modern foreign works was thought to contribute not only to the modernization of Chinese fiction but that of the entire society. For a discussion of the link between translation and modernization in China, see Xie, 'Translating Modernity Towards Translating China', 135–36.

2.2 Zhao Jingshen's 'African' literature: Olive Schreiner's *Dreams* and a genealogy of Black American poetic 'failure'

During the course of the 1920s, the Black slave topos persisted as a fixture of scientific and educational discourses (as shown in the last chapter) but the latter years of the decade saw its emergence in a new, albeit very peripheral, role vis-à-vis translation and literature. Zhao Jingshen attempted to construct the first paratextual 'African' literary history through the use of the epitext, a paratextual form through which the ideological context of a translation often enacts a form of *closure*.¹⁶ In Urpo Kovala's terms, this refers to "the delimitation of the plurality of possible interpretations", based on a conception of ideology as a "discursive practice" or "an aspect of the general process of meaning production" which "is realized discursively in the interaction between texts and more or less structured background assumptions".¹⁷ In Zhao's paratext, Black slaves finally achieve limited historical agency and become the literary progenitors of Black authors of the early twentieth century, a genealogy nevertheless so saturated in stereotypes that these authors emerge as *exceptions* to Black abjectness rather than full representatives of Black modernity. As part of his introduction to African literature, Zhao also profiled Olive Schreiner's

¹⁶ Zhao Jingshen was a prolific writer, translator and editor. As Mark Gamsa notes, his views on translation led to his being ridiculed by Lu Xun and marginalized for decades within the Chinese literary establishment; this appears to be substantiated by the absence of biographical and bibliographical information in a number of recent companions and dictionaries of modern Chinese literature (see Gamsa, *The Reading of Russian Literature in China*, 61). For further confirmation of his marginalization, see also Li, 'A Study of Chinese Translations and Interpretations of HC Andersen's Tales', 61.

¹⁷ Kovala, 'Translations, Paratextual Mediation, and Ideological Closure', 121.

work *From Man to Man*. The de-emphasis on the imperial West in Chinese literary circles, motivated by the dominant ideology of the May Fourth period referred to in the last section, may also shed some light on Zhao's omission and refiguring of the racial conflicts in his handling of the works that he considered and the sources on which he relied. I also touch on the role of writer, translator and editor Mao Dun, a figure who, despite his interest in oppressed people's literatures, perhaps best typifies the curious lack of engagement with Black literature among the left-wing literary establishment of the Republican era. As chapter four of the present work will show, this attitude would persist into the Maoist era, by which time Mao Dun and his peers would occupy positions at the apex of political and cultural power and decisively shape the fortunes of Black African literature in China.

In the late 1920s, Zhao began editing a section called "Miscellaneous words on overseas literature" in *Xiaoshuo yuebao* (*The Short Story Magazine*), a publication based in Shanghai which was "the most influential journal in the 1920s when it comes to the breadth of its readership and the quantity of translated titles from small countries' literatures".¹⁸ The rise to prominence of this journal coincided with the emergence of the category *ruoxiao minzu* ('small and weak nations'), which appeared alongside and perhaps displaced references

¹⁸ Chen, 'Xiaoshuo yuebao (1921–1931) as a Cultural Mediator of Small Literatures in China', 114–20.

to oppressed peoples in the literary sphere for a time in the 1920s but which remained an important term in socio-political writings well beyond that. Craig A. Smith points out that this term specifically invoked a Leninist temporal division of the world into “imperialist nations [who] were those in the stage of financial capitalism, and *ruoxiao* nations [who] were those that remained in an agricultural and craftsman stage of development”.¹⁹ While Smith also notes that *Xiaoshuo yuebao* was “particularly instrumental in introducing works of Polish, Jewish, Black, and Irish writers”, his reference to Eber’s book as the source of this information further substantiates my assertion that her discussion creates the mistaken impression that Black literature was translated in the 1920s when neither her book nor any other publication of which I am aware provides any evidence of this. He also appears to assume that *ruoxiao minzu* held the same meaning in political circles as it did in literary ones in the 1920s; I assert that the priorities in the two spheres, though related, were different, and that Africans and African Americans could more easily be incorporated into the political category (as I show in the next section) whereas the translation record suggests that recognition in the literary sphere, based as it was on the assignation of status to an author as worthy of admiration and emulation, was far more difficult for Black writers.

¹⁹ Smith, ‘China as the Leader of the Weak and Small’, 43–45.

Smith also singles out the role of Mao Dun, who became editor of *Xiaoshuo yuebao* in 1921, as an advocate of this type of literature.²⁰ Mao was undoubtedly one of the most prolific translators of the literatures of the “small and weak”, as shown in the pages of the journal between 1920 and 1928.²¹ He had also introduced significant changes to the publication to reflect this focus during his brief stint as its editor. However, as Yehua Chen’s tabulated summaries of the scope of the translation activity undertaken in this journal show, Black literature was entirely overlooked by Mao and all other contributors between 1921 and 1931. Indeed, one of the few vestiges of any concern with Black literatures from this period is his profile of the first-ever Black recipient of the Prix Goncourt, the most prestigious award in French literature — René Maran for his novel *Batouala*. Mao, writing under his real name Shen Yanbing, was the first editor of a Chinese publication ever to compose such a profile; it formed part of a section that he inaugurated called ‘News of Overseas Literature’, the previous name for the section to which Zhao Jingshen would later contribute numerous pieces. Mao named his profile ‘A writer of the Black race receives the 1921 Prix Goncourt’.²² A man of his racializing intellectual milieu, Mao then focused on the shock with which this award was received in the European literary

²⁰ Through Mao’s “own writings and his work as a translator, editor, and publisher, as a literary critic and theoretician, and finally as the minister of culture from 1949 to 1964, he left indelible marks in nearly every aspect of the literary and artistic endeavours of modern China” (see Ying, *Historical Dictionary of Modern Chinese Literature*, 134).

²¹ Chen, 128–33.

²² Shen, ‘Heizu xiaoshuojia dele yijiueryi nian Gonggu’er Jiangjin’ [A writer of the Black race receives the 1921 Prix Goncourt], 1–2. cf. 今年发表那一九二一年份的龚古尔奖金的得者姓名，也使欧洲文坛大吃一惊因为这位得者不但不是法国人，并且不是白种人，乃是一个黑种人，向来没有什么人知道的一个黑种人...

establishment because of the name and especially the race of the author as well as the fact that he was not well known or French. Elsewhere, under a photograph of Maran (probably the first such photograph of a Black author in a Chinese literary journal) the caption again refers to Maran as a “man of the Black race living abroad in France” and notes that he was the first “man of a coloured race” to receive this award.²³ While Mao’s epitext quotes Maran’s anti-imperialist introduction directly, provides biographical, plot and character information, as well as relating the circumstances under which Maran won the award, the strong emphasis on race perhaps reveals that, for Mao, a writer such as Maran needed the recognition of the Western literary establishment in order to be taken seriously. It seems that Mao, a powerful cultural mediator at the centre of the May Fourth movement, continued to rely on the norms of this establishment when it came to Black writers despite his openness, as Chen shows, to the writers of the “small and weak nations” whom he claimed were often ignored by these authorities.²⁴ Mao relinquished the editorship to Zheng Zhenduo after only a year but continued to play a crucial role in the 1920s and 1930s. It would be Zheng, however, who would invite Zhao to edit the section on overseas literature.²⁵

²³ Shen, 1–2. cf. 侨居法国的黑种人...第一个有色人种...

²⁴ Chen, 126.

²⁵ Under Zheng’s editorship of *Xiaoshuo yuebao*, the concept of the “small and weak” literatures receded “as a discursive tool” as he tended to favour the use of “world literature”, thereby treating the literatures of different countries ostensibly “as equals”. However, his interventions did improve the commercial viability of the journal after Mao Dun’s reforms had seemingly led to a decline in sales (see Chen, 119–27). Zheng does not seem to have had any particular interest in Black or African literature.

As Chen records, Zhao's brief discussions on these literatures were intended to be "introductory texts" for readers, providing new information that could not be found in other Chinese literary histories. They were based on information that Zhao had extracted from a range of foreign publications and included his translations of brief works such as poems occasionally.²⁶ Chen states that Zhao "later collected these articles and published them successively in a systematic annual summary book titled *Zuijin de shijie wenxue* (*Recent World Literature*), *1929 nian de shijie wenxue* (*World Literature of 1929*) and *1930 nian de shijie wenxue* (*World Literature of 1930*)".²⁷ As suggested by the titles of these books, Zhao was concerned with presenting readers with a 'snapshot' of world literature in a particular year; the contents pages of *Zuijinde shijie wenxue* reveal the continued bias towards Russian and Euro-American literature in terms of sheer number of texts and authors profiled but the serious attempt at including 'smaller' literatures from such diverse regions as Scandinavia, Eastern Europe and, most significantly for the present discussion, Africa, should not be ignored.²⁸ Chen points out that the extension of the coverage of *Zuijinde shijie wenxue* to "Turkish, Canadian and African literature" was seemingly Zhao's

²⁶ Chen states that these sources included "American and English magazines, such as *Living Age*, *New Masses*, *Modern Quarterly*, *New Adelphi*, *Dial*, *London Mercury*, *The Bookman*, Literary Supplements of *London Times* and *New York Times*, as well as *Slavonic Review* and *Scandinavian Review*, which opened a window into small nations' literature" (see Chen, 120).

²⁷ Chen, 147.

²⁸ See 'Muci' [Contents] in Zhao, *Zuijinde shijie wenxue* [*Recent World Literature*], 1–5. The bias spoken of above was perhaps at least partially the result of the selection trends in the materials available to him in the foreign publications. As Chen notes, Zhao complained that the selection criteria were "snobbish", only focusing on "big names" (see also Chen, 147).

own choice and, although building on the philosophy of greater inclusiveness established by editors of *Xiaoshuo yuebao*, did not necessarily reflect any broader interest in these literatures.²⁹ As Eber notes, translation choices were very much a matter of the individual proclivities of various editors during this period.³⁰ The whimsical nature of this interest may have been indicated by the fact that ‘African’ literature did not re-appear in Zhao’s above-mentioned 1929 and 1930 publications.

The ‘African’ section of Zhao’s collection appears at the end of the book and contains two brief essays respectively entitled ‘Xulainade yizhu’ (‘Schreiner’s posthumous work’) and ‘Heirende shi’ (‘Negro poetry’).³¹ It seems likely that *Dreams (Meng)*, translated into Chinese by the literary luminary Zhou Zuoren and Zhang Jinfen (also known as C.F. Nüshi) in 1925, inspired the inclusion of Schreiner’s work in this section.³² Zhao mentioned that, since Zhou had introduced Schreiner’s work to his circle, and the translation itself was already well known (a second edition was published in 1927), the reading public would already be very familiar with her work.³³ In this epitext, Zhao provided a

²⁹ Chen, 120.

³⁰ Eber, *Voices from Afar*, 18.

³¹ These two essays first appeared in the June 1927 and November 1928 editions of *Xiaoshuo yuebao* respectively.

³² Zhang Jinfen was “an early woman poet” and “also famous as a translator of Oscar Wilde’s work” (see Hockx, *Questions of Style*, 269).

³³ Zhao, 169. cf. 这位南非女小说家须莱纳尔 (Olive Schreiner) 恐怕是国人所熟知的, 因为周作人曾在自己的圈里介绍过她, 由于张近芬女士合译国她的《梦》。

summary of the plot of Schreiner's posthumously published book *From Man to Man* (1927), adding information about the background to the writing of the book and details about the central characters. For Zhao, as for Zhou in his foreword and Zhang in her translator's preface to the 1927 translation, Schreiner's feminism is a central aspect of both her fame and her work.³⁴ Zhao claimed that, in *From Man to Man*, Schreiner's individuality is "distinctly expressed" and that her feminist theory is implicit within the artistic construction of the book.³⁵

It is important to note that nowhere in Zhao, Zhou and Zhang's paratextual materials is any mention made of the potential significance of the translation of South African or African literature; the only gesture towards such a notion is the sheer fact of the placement of Zhao's text in a section intended to introduce readers to African fiction and the reference to Schreiner as South African. Zhou mentioned Schreiner's concerns regarding the enmity between 'South Africans' (meaning Boers) and the British, but did not mention any other peoples of southern Africa.³⁶ Southern African history was thus a matter of the conflict between Europeans on African soil; Africa entered history insofar as it was the setting for this clash while African involvement or agency was simply not

³⁴ See Zhou, 'Xu' [Foreword], 1–8; Zhang, 'Yizhe zixu' [Translator's preface], 1–4.

³⁵ Zhao, 169. cf. 这部小说也是很清晰的表现着作者的个性，将她的女权论隐含在艺术里面。

³⁶ Zhou, 'Xu' [Foreword], 1–2.

important. Zhao's epitext contains a single reference to the local people of southern Africa and is worth translating at length:

This entire story is a tragedy. It tells of the two sisters, the younger called Bertie and the elder called Rebekah. Their father is a farmer from England originally, currently a settler in the Karoo county of South Africa. Their family raises sheep. The house's surroundings are all rocks and thorns; at night the baboons call and squabble; *the Kaffirs (sic) dance in their grass huts*; sometimes a spotted leopard dashes in sneakily to surprise the herd of sheep; sometimes a large snake rustles in the dry grass — all this entices us into a fantasy setting. Her (Schreiner's) adopted "setting" is truly extremely lovely!³⁷

In this 'setting', the only human agents are the white family who have adopted their new home through membership in a settler colonial society. Like the conflict between the Boers and the British mentioned in Zhou's text, their story is enacted in Africa, which serves as little more than its exotic backdrop. The local people are dehumanized through their juxtaposition with noisy, dangerous and threatening animals and are merely another component of a natural environment surrounding the house that contains "rocks", "thorns" and "grass". The 'habitat' of the indigenous African people is thus contrasted with, and is constructed as somehow threatening to, the domesticity of the settler home. The final statement regarding Schreiner's 'adoption' of this "lovely" place for her

³⁷ Zhao, 170. cf. 整个故事是个悲剧。所说是两姊妹，妹妹叫白苔（Bertie），姊姊名叫莱白茄（Rebekah）。她们的父亲本是英国的农夫，如今移殖在南非的克户县。她们家里养了羊群。房舍的周围尽是山石和荆棘；夜间狒狒叫着吵着，开发人（Kaffirs）在草舍里跳舞，有时花斑豹偷偷跑来袭取羊群，有时大蛇在干草里索索的向着——这些都引诱我们到一个梦幻的境地，她所采取的“环境”真可爱极了！ Italics are mine.

story obscures the violence of the colonial invasion that made this story possible. The setting is offered as a 'lure' and an exotic incitement to consumption for the Chinese reading public, perhaps evoking the backdrops of the popular translations of such works as H. Rider Haggard's adventure stories considered in the last chapter. Even if this were Zhao's intention, this enthusiastic interpolation regarding the natural setting remains somewhat anomalous, given that Schreiner's subject matter was entirely dissimilar from writers like Haggard. Furthermore, it is somewhat jarring to the reader, after the reference to the story as a tragedy and statements regarding Schreiner's feminism. Two long paragraphs appear subsequently that lay out brief character sketches of the Bertie and Rebekah as well as summarize their respective plotlines and also seem to have no obvious relation to the interpolation. It seems reasonable to conclude that it was meant to function as a promotional device that simultaneously reinforced a stereotypical view of Africa and its peoples. Moreover, race, but for the abovementioned detail, is entirely absent from Zhao's exposition, despite the centrality of Rebekah's husband's infidelity with a Black woman and her subsequent adoption of the child of this union to her story, as well as her shifting views on race and tentative solidarity with Black

women characters.³⁸ He merely noted that Rebekah had four children and that she “discovered that her husband had many disloyal aspects”.³⁹

In attempting to understand Zhao’s handling of Blackness in this epitext, locating him within Republican Shanghai’s media and publishing industry may be helpful as he was deeply embedded in this context as an author, a member of literary societies and an editor.⁴⁰ Leo Ou-fan Lee highlights the relatively unique situation in Shanghai during this period when he states that “by 1930 Shanghai had become a bustling cosmopolitan metropolis, the fifth largest city in the world and China’s largest harbour and treaty port, a city that was already an international legend (‘the Paris of Asia’), and a world of splendid modernity set apart from the still tradition-bound countryside that was China”.⁴¹ William Schaefer points out that “the widespread presence” of visual as well as verbal images of the ‘savage’ or ‘primitive’ “in the mass culture of Shanghai raises the question of how race and the savage were represented in the semi-colonial metropolis” and why such images were common “when China was so often on the receiving end of Western racist discourses”.⁴² Leaving aside Schaefer’s own tentative answers to these questions in relation to the specific works with

³⁸ For a more comprehensive discussion on Schreiner and her views on race in *From Man to Man*, see Snaith, *Modernist Voyages*, 36–37.

³⁹ Zhao, 171. cf. 她生了四个小孩，在她结婚生活中，发现她的丈夫有许多不忠实的地方，...

⁴⁰ Hockx, *Questions of Style*, 269–71.

⁴¹ Lee, *Shanghai Modern*, 3–4.

⁴² Schaefer, ‘Shanghai Savage’, 91–92.

which he is concerned, I suggest that his conclusions regarding the “precariousness” of a “subject position for a Shanghai (if not Chinese) identity throughout many of these texts and images” may be of relevance to Zhao’s epitext.⁴³ Schaefer asserts that “all of these representations of the savage are meant to deny any identification of Chinese with Africans...” and thus allow Chinese “to identify themselves with civilized whites”. In order for this to succeed, the Blacks in Zhao’s epitext need to blend into the wild and ‘savage’ landscape of Africa and the unequal and exploitative nature of their relations with whites (as epitomized by, for example, miscegenation in the master–servant relationship) must be overlooked because of the potential similarity between their situation and that of the Chinese subject who, as Shih notes, experienced “colonial racism” on the level of “day-to-day contact” with Shanghai’s foreign residents.⁴⁴ I would argue that the fragility of the modern Chinese identity that was being staked out in the racialized discourses spoken of earlier in this section appears thus to be salient in this context and that Zhao’s moves in this text may speak to the ambivalent position of an intelligentsia who, as Shih puts it, “daily experienced both an adoration of Western culture and a loathing of the foreign imperialists” in Shanghai and other foreign concessions. Furthermore, the disconcerting parallel between China and Africa expressed in Shih’s apt description of Republican China as “an Africa of multiple

⁴³ Schaefer, 116–17.

⁴⁴ Shih, *The Lure of the Modern*, 283–84.

imperialisms struggling over spheres of influence” may also have been suppressed by the dominant ideology.⁴⁵ Instead, the fiction of an Africa that had already been ‘carved up’ by the colonial powers and was inherently incapable of becoming modern had to be preserved.

There were other examples of displacement in the writing of modernist experimental literature in Shanghai itself. As Andrew F. Jones notes, the city was also host to a “small but vital” African American community of jazz musicians and their families until 1937 who were relatively well treated and whose presence as part of the entertainment scene inspired modernist fiction writers of the so-called *Xin ganjue pai* (‘New Sensationist school’) in the 1930s.⁴⁶ For my purposes, Jones’s observation that these stories are “densely populated with Black musicians” who are “almost invariably subject to miserable mistreatment at the hands of the clubs” in which they work is again suggestive of the lingering influence of the Black slave topos since these representations “fly in the face of what we know to be true of the Shanghai jazz world, in which African-Americans were not only outnumbered by Russians, Filipinos, and other Asians, but also better paid”. According to Jones’s reading, using Black musicians to depict the “powerlessness of the proletariat...as well

⁴⁵ Shih, 32.

⁴⁶ Jones, ‘Black Internationale: Notes on the Chinese Jazz Age’, 230–31.

as the vulnerability of the colonised” beneath Shanghai’s world of “fevered consumption” was an element of both Mu Shiying — also considered by Schaefer — and Hei Ying’s stories.⁴⁷ Here, it would appear that the familiar move of forcing Black bodies to embody colonial oppression and exploitation in place of Chinese is once again enacted, but, unlike previous iterations, the connection to the Chinese urban resident, the true victim of imperialism in the semi-colonial metropolis, remains unacknowledged. This enables an untroubled identification with the Chinese characters in the stories, whom Jones describes as “affluent party-goers” in his discussion of one of the stories and “modish young clubgoers” in the other.

When this introductory text to *From Man to Man* is juxtaposed with the subsequent text on Black poetry, the contours of the problem facing Zhao in his groping towards a way to talk about African literature start to become visible. Kovala points out that epitexts rely much more strongly on the “wider cultural context” than peritexts that directly ‘frame’ or ‘package’ a literary text.⁴⁸ He adds that this context is “very loaded ideologically” and often “determines possible modes of reading, including resisting ones”. The nature of Zhao’s publication placed a number of limitations on his introductory texts; they had to

⁴⁷ Jones, 237–43.

⁴⁸ Kovala, ‘Translations, Paratextual Mediation, and Ideological Closure’, 141.

be brief and draw on what was familiar to the imagined reader. Schreiner's work was already known to Chinese readers and her status as a 'South African' novelist (rather than an English novelist living in South Africa) enabled and sanctioned the formation of an 'African' canon in the way that a Black African novelist, had Zhao been disposed to include one, or a discussion of African oral and literary traditions, could not. The ideological context of racialized thinking and its implication in local Chinese identity formation as well as the ubiquity of the Black slave topos may have effectively enacted the ideological closure spoken of earlier.

Nevertheless, Zhao seems to have seen the need to incorporate Black literary voices in a section purportedly about African literature and his attempt to do so under the pressure of reader expectations shaped by the context was to construct a literary genealogy that linked the *ahistorical* (Africa) with the *historical* (America); this move allowed Black poets, dislocated from Africa by the Atlantic slave trade, to enter history and secure a degree of subjectivity in 'white' America as the literary forebears *not* of African poetry but rather of African American poetry. By calling this sub-section of the 'Africa' epitexts 'Negro poetry', Zhao was able to construct a genealogy of Blackness that denied Black American writers 'citizenship' in the American literary world (especially since 'real' American writers are profiled elsewhere in his

publication).⁴⁹ It also deprived Africa not only of its actual literary history, which remained completely unknown to Chinese readers, but of the possibility of producing a local literary heritage at all. Instead, for Africa, history is always elsewhere and enacted by ‘white’ others; the Black slave thus emerges here again as African literature’s only possible literary progenitor because of its relation with the ‘white’ subject position.

Zhao began his text by noting that the interest shown in Black poetry by Americans was a recent matter, thereby effectively ‘segregating’ this poetry from mainstream American literature.⁵⁰ It should also be noted that Zhao did not feel compelled to eulogize all the figures he mentioned; rather, he was contemptuous of some of them. This is true of the first “Black slave” poet to whom he referred: Jupiter Hammon.⁵¹ Zhao was dismissive of the importance of Hammon’s poetry, describing his 1761 collection as “merely religious songs of praise to God” and later implying that Hammon was ignorant since he “only knew the Bible”.⁵² Interestingly, Zhao’s attitude to Hammon’s religiosity is reminiscent of Lin Shu and Wei Yi’s attempt to ‘dethrone’ Uncle Tom in their

⁴⁹ I have opted for the outdated and offensive term ‘Negro’ here as it was still very much in use in the English-language world at the time and because it is used in Zhao’s main source of information.

⁵⁰ Zhao, 173. cf. 黑人的诗，引起美国人注意，是最近的事。

⁵¹ Jupiter Hammon was the first Black slave poet ever to publish a poem in 1760. While his legacy is controversial because he never openly discussed slavery in his works, some critics have found radical elements in the inclusivity of his Christian vision (see Samuels, ‘Hammon, Jupiter (1711-1806?)’, 224–26).

⁵² Zhao, 173. cf. 第一个黑诗人哈孟（Jupiter Hammon）虽然在一七六一年就出版了一本诗，其实只能算是颂扬上帝的宗教歌。...哈孟只知道圣经...

translation by stripping him of the glory of his Christian martyrdom; just as in the case of the translators, Zhao's repudiation of the Christian aspects of the tradition that he was describing in relation to Hammon and others is also ironically similar to later English-language criticisms of Hammon.⁵³ Here, Zhao also enacted a dethronement of his own by denying Hammon's primacy as a putative founder of a tradition and using him to introduce an alternative progenitor, one whose place of birth made her more authentically 'African': Phillis Wheatley.⁵⁴

Zhao translated the title of Hammon's poem that the poet dedicated to Wheatley in full, in so doing creating a direct link with the African continent: "Address to Miss Phillis Wheatly [sic], Ethiopian Poetess, in Boston, who came from Africa at eight years of age, and soon became acquainted with the gospel of Jesus Christ".⁵⁵ Translated back from Zhao's Chinese version, certain suppressions and alterations are noticeable: 'Dedicated to young Miss Wheatley, who is an African poet, brought at eight years of age from Africa to Boston, and who not long afterwards became acquainted with the New Testament Bible'.⁵⁶

Wheatley's "Ethiopian" appellation was unimportant to Zhao as she was

⁵³ For an example of such criticism, see Samuels, 'Hammon, Jupiter (1711-1806?)', 225.

⁵⁴ Phillis Wheatley was a "slave, poet, teenage celebrity, pioneer, and one of the founders of the African-American literary tradition" who "earned and won her way into the literary world of 18th-century Boston and, to a degree, London...Wheatley had been kidnapped from Senegal, West Africa" (see Samuels, 'Wheatley, Phillis (1753-1784)', 543-46).

⁵⁵ Samuels, 'Hammon, Jupiter (1711-1806?)', 225.

⁵⁶ Zhao, 173. cf. 献给惠特莱姑娘，她是非洲女诗人，八岁从非洲到波士顿来，不久便认识了新约圣经。

intended to represent Africa collectively and function as a link, both genetically and through the unacknowledged violence of her passage to America, that could legitimate the rest of his exposition. Rather than highlighting her religious conversion by mentioning Jesus, Zhao's translation implies that she came to know the New Testament Bible as a text, equivalent to other texts by Pope and Ovid that she also knew, which made her much "brighter" than Hammon who only knew the Bible.⁵⁷ After mentioning that Wheatley had been purchased from a "Black slave shop", Zhao added that the "American" who bought her immediately began her education; Wheatley in effect is a commodity who becomes an embodied subject through her purchase and naming and is 'given' her poetic voice through her exposure to Western religious and literary texts. Zhao then offered what may have been the first ever translation of a Black poet's poems in China ('Imagination'), described Wheatley's celebrity years in London after 'Americans' had brought her there, and completed his discussion of her with an evaluation of her achievement. While Zhao's appropriation of Wheatley for the purposes of constructing his genealogy appears to be his own, he was undoubtedly indebted to James Weldon Johnson's preface (an 'Essay on the Negro's Creative Genius') to his edited collection entitled *The Book of American Negro Poetry* (1922) for the text of Wheatley's poem and those of other poets as well as greatly influenced by Johnson's assessment of the

⁵⁷ Zhao, 173. cf. 她比哈孟高明得多了; 哈孟只知道圣经, 惠特莱却还知道蒲伯 (Pope) 和阿维德 (Ovid) ...

standing of various figures in the African American poetic tradition.⁵⁸ Zhao was likely to have been drawing on Johnson when he claimed that Wheatley's poems were mediocre but then diverged starkly from Johnson when he stated that, since she was a "founder", people, "no matter Black or white", kept this a secret and never "said a bad word about her".⁵⁹ Johnson had argued that there had been a "conspiracy" to deny Wheatley her "rightful place" in the history of African American literature and that her poetry, though not "great", was certainly "important" and must be judged according to the artistic standards of her day.⁶⁰ Zhao then referred to Johnson directly and paraphrased his view that Pope had been her model as well as that "had she come under the influence of Wordsworth, Byron, Keats or Shelley, she would have done greater work". However, Zhao disagreed slightly with Johnson, claiming that, while it was no doubt true that studying Pope and the Bible could not have led to much progress, deliberately imitating Shelley and the others would also be too lacking in "individuality".⁶¹ It is not clear whether Zhao had other sources for his evaluations but he seems to have been determined to highlight the pernicious

⁵⁸ Johnson, *The Book of American Negro Poetry*, 25. James Weldon Johnson was "an educator, lawyer, diplomat, writer, and activist" and "designer of the New Negro Renaissance" (see Dowling, 'Johnson, James Weldon', 282). Zhao called him "the Negro Johnson who edited..." and seems to have invoked Johnson on the basis of the latter's race rather than any recognition of his significance in that era.

⁵⁹ Zhao, 174. cf. 诗虽平常，因为她是创始人，所以此后无论黑人白人，都讳莫如深，不说她一句坏话。

⁶⁰ Johnson, *The Book of American Negro Poetry*, 23–27.

⁶¹ Zhao, 174. cf. 编美洲黑人诗选的黑人约翰生 (J.W. Johnson) 说惠特莱是模仿蒲伯和圣经，如果能取法乎上，学学拜伦雪莱济慈华兹渥斯等就好了。其实学蒲伯和圣经固然没有长进，刻意去模仿雪莱等，也未免太没有个性。Zhao appears to have misinterpreted the word "influence" as well as the subjunctive mood of Johnson's remark, especially since Wheatley was a figure of a slightly earlier era than the great Romantic poets.

influence of the Bible (unlike Johnson) and, while adopting aspects of Johnson's views regarding the relative importance of Wheatley and others, ignored, for example, Johnson's favourable comparison of Wheatley with the white poets of her day. Indeed, throughout Zhao's text, whites are depicted as mentors or benefactors and any inkling of racial conflict or suggestion that the works of Black writers could somehow be comparable is ignored, despite the presence of such ideas in Johnson's text — his primary source.

Without directly citing him again, Zhao appears to have been broadly following Johnson's historical framework in the remainder of this epitext, and yet simultaneously simplifying it, shifting its emphasis or introducing his own alterations. While both Johnson and Zhao note the absence of a direct poetic successor to Wheatley until Paul Laurence Dunbar in the late 1800s, Johnson asserted that many of the poets of the intervening years showed "marked talent" but were lacking in "mastery of technique" and mentioned several examples of those who had displayed great potential nonetheless; Zhao remarked that the "Negro poetic scene had gradually declined" after Wheatley's death.⁶² He then offered a description of the period until Dunbar that effectively negated the value of a century of Black poetic output and highlighted that, for Zhao, white

⁶² Johnson, 28; Zhao, 174. cf. 自惠特莱女士在一七八四逝世后，黑人的诗坛也就逐渐消沉...; Paul Laurence Dunbar was "one of the two best-selling turn-of-the-century American poets, Black or white", and "is best known for being the finest African-American composer of Black dialect poetry" (see Dowling, 'Dunbar, Paul Laurence (1872-1906)', 154).

American approbation remained the standard for determining the success or failure of Black works:

Only with the publication of Dunbar's *Oak and Ivy* in 1892 did flames burst forth again out of the poetic ashes of over a century of desolation. It was also only from Dunbar onwards that Negro poetry achieved the honour of receiving criticism.⁶³

Here it seems that Zhao meant literary criticism, a form of institutional recognition from white authorities; this is emphasized later in the passage on Dunbar when he noted that famous literary figure William Dean Howells had written a piece of “good criticism” for Dunbar, meaning Howells had reviewed his work favourably, and subsequently also provided an introduction (an expression of paratextual approbation) to one of his collections.⁶⁴ This type of criticism was an “honour”, especially from an acknowledged figure like Howells.⁶⁵ The imagery of “ash” and “desolation” that summed up the century before Dunbar suggests that Dunbar was an *exception* to the collective failure of his race's poetic tradition and the mediocrity of his forebears Wheatley and Hammon. Zhao added a number of biographical details about Dunbar's life,

⁶³ Zhao, 174. cf. 直到邓白(Dunbar)的橡树与春藤于一八九二年出版, 这百余年来冷落了的诗灰, 方才重新燃起烈焰。也是从邓白起, 黑人的诗方才得到被批评的荣誉。

⁶⁴ Zhao, 175. cf. 橡树与春藤出版四年后, 又有大与小出版, 霍威尔[Howells]替他写了一篇很好的批评。第三本诗集下等生活的抒情诗出版时, 霍威尔还替他做了一篇序。

⁶⁵ However, despite Zhao's presentation of this paratextual endorsement of Dunbar as positive, it must be noted that the use of paratexts by white institutional authorities to ‘recommend’ works by African American writers during the struggle for freedom from slavery is critiqued by Beth A. McCoy (in her discussion of Frederick Douglass's *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*) who cautions that even a preface by a well-meaning white authority can enact “an indirect white supremacy, different from the brutality against which white abolitionists fought but one that interferes with the fugitive writer's authorial primacy nonetheless” (see McCoy, ‘Race and the (Para) Textual Condition’, 157).

including his Black slave heritage from both his parents, his father a fugitive who had fled to Canada and his mother whose mistress was responsible for his early education. Like Wheatley, Dunbar's relation to a white owner transforms him into a literate historical subject and enables the first step towards literary subjectivity. He also recorded how Dunbar's life changed from when he had worked as a lift operator to survive to his trip to London after his publication successes and his acquaintance with the "Negro composer" Samuel Coleridge-Taylor who set his poems to music. In encapsulating the significance of Dunbar's contribution, Zhao stated the following:

He [Dunbar] was able to discard the missionary posture and not compose religious poems but rather bring his own thoughts and emotions into play. This is his success. He opened the door for poetry and those pious religious poets would never again be imprisoned by it.⁶⁶

This alternative assessment of Dunbar, seemingly entirely Zhao's, is offered before a brief remark that Dunbar was an exponent of dialect poetry, the achievement for which Johnson claimed he was chiefly famous and for which he remains well known.⁶⁷ Zhao implied that he was famous for this by denigrating those who subsequently tried to copy him but were "too far behind to catch up", thereby again highlighting his exceptionalism and extending the genealogy of collective Black failure to anonymous others. The innovativeness

⁶⁶ Zhao, 175. cf. 他能够脱去传教士的态度，不做宗教诗，能够自己发挥思想和情绪，这就是他的成功，他把诗的门打开，不让它再拘囚那些虔诚的宗教诗人了。

⁶⁷ Zhao, 175. cf. 邓白是以方言来写诗的。后来虽有许多人模仿，都是望尘莫及。

of the use of dialect as a literary tool, despite its suggestiveness in a Chinese context ostensibly receptive to a greater diversity of literatures, was ignored. Zhao did not refer to Dunbar's significance as an American poet (which would undermine his inclusion in the 'African' genealogy); his overall evaluation of the poet's achievement falls well short of Johnson's extolment of him as "the greatest figure in literature which the coloured race in the United States has produced".⁶⁸ His evaluation of Dunbar's peers and the subsequent generation is also negative, suggesting that their achievements amounted literally to nothing, with the exception of the critic William Braithwaite who was simply described as a poetry anthologizer and as having "written many articles" without any further elaboration, despite Johnson's explanation of Braithwaite's considerable importance as a scholar and promoter of other poets' careers.⁶⁹

In the final section, Zhao mentioned some of the most celebrated poets of the Harlem Renaissance, including Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen and Fenton Johnson but provided no biographical details about them other than that they were famous. Eber notes that such information as well as "critical discussions" on them were "scarce" in China but does not cite any source other than Zhao.⁷⁰

It is possible that Zhao simply did not have information about Hughes and

⁶⁸ Johnson, 41.

⁶⁹ Johnson, 49–50; Zhao, 175. cf. 大家的成绩只好打零分，这时只出了一个诗的批评家白来司维 (W.S. Braithwaite) 他在一九一三年起，每年选美国诗一本，还做了许多论文。

⁷⁰ Eber, *Voices from Afar*, 41.

Cullen because James Weldon Johnson did not discuss them and referred to Fenton Johnson only in passing, noting that he was a promising young poet of the “ultra-modern school”.⁷¹ Chen suggests that Zhao had to ‘make do’ with what was available when he states that Zhao “had to borrow materials from the editorial department of *Xiaoshuo yuebao*...via Xu Tiaofu and Zheng Zhenduo when writing ‘Miscellaneous words on overseas literature’”, no doubt drawing on Zhao’s own comments in his introduction to *Zuijinde shijie wenxue*.⁷² However, Zhao then went on to enact the familiar pattern of dismissing the achievements of these poets by grouping Hughes, Cullen and Johnson with those poets who only “knew how to implore God’s pity and moan about their desire for freedom”; this factually inaccurate description essentially figures these Black moderns as little more than the equivalent of the abject and anonymous Black slaves crying to heaven in the title of the Lin Shu and Wei Yi’s translation. This appears to negate the possibilities of a collective Black renaissance and thus implicitly contests the implied coevalness in the Chinese literary sphere of Eber’s juxtaposition of the Harlem Renaissance alongside the other literary movements that she considers.

⁷¹ Johnson, 52.

⁷² Chen, ‘*Xiaoshuo yuebao* (1921–1931) as a Cultural Mediator of Small Literatures in China’, 121.

Claude McKay was, however, different in Zhao's estimation. In McKay's "breast", according to Zhao, was the "fire" that "screamed" for "revolution" and "battle".⁷³ The subsequent description of McKay is most likely the first ever literary paean to a Black writer in China and merits a full translation:

McKay was born on the British West Indies island of Jamaica where he received his basic education, did a spell in the constabulary, and started writing poetry. A friend helped him to come to America for further studies and complete his degree. After that, he washed dishes and worked as a lift operator and a doorman — all common occupations for American Negro intellectuals and artists.⁷⁴ McKay's first collection of poems, mostly resembling folk songs and written using the local dialect, appeared when he was still living in Jamaica. McKay's subsequent works were fervently revolutionary in character. His passion overflows, far beyond what the older generation or his contemporaries could achieve. He truly has his own things to say and his own vitality. Other Negro poets only know how to bemoan their own fate; they believe that, since they are Black, they can never wish to have their lives spared and can only know begging for the pity and sympathy of others, but McKay sings with fervent intensity...⁷⁵

⁷³ Zhao, 176. cf. 因为梅开是与别人的诗人[sic.]不同的, 别的诗人只知道恳求上帝怜悯, 哀呼着要求自由; 而梅开的胸中, 却是一盆热火, 大呼着革命, 狂呼着战斗的。

⁷⁴ It is not clear what the sources of some of the details of Zhao's biography are or if Zhao was freely adapting Johnson's biography of McKay for his own purposes. McKay is both a real person and a literary character who can be bent to various uses freely but still be accepted as 'real'. The reference to such jobs being common for Negro intellectuals and artists perhaps hints at the growing left-wing emphasis on the role of such figures as engaged members of the working class. For Johnson's biography of McKay, see Johnson, 247.

⁷⁵ Zhao, 175–76. cf. 梅开生于英属的西印度僚梅卡(Jamaica), 在那儿受初等教育, 在那儿的警部里混了一阵, 又在那儿开始作诗。一个朋友帮助他到美国去读书, 完成他的学业。后来他替人家洗碗, 司升降梯, 做门房等——这是美国黑人知识阶级和艺术家的普通的职业。梅开第一卷诗出版时, 还住在僚梅卡, 大部是用本地方言做的似民歌, 此后梅开的诗便含着热烈革命性了。他的热情迸溢, 远非老前辈和同时代的人所可企及。他是确有他自己所要说的话, 确有生命力的。别的黑诗人只知道自怨自艾, 以为自己是黑人, 永无超生的希望, 只知求人哀怜, 求人同情、而梅开却是慷慨激越的歌道....

As Chen suggests, “the introduction of foreign literature to China of this period showed an obvious predilection for writers’ biographies”.⁷⁶ While nothing comparable to the ‘canonization’ of certain Western writers that was often accomplished through biographical paratexts is discernible in this case, the way in which McKay’s ‘life’ was presented evokes admiration in the reader and perhaps anticipates the eulogizing of heroic writer–heroes of the communist period, especially in the valorisation of revolutionary fervour.⁷⁷ McKay emerges as a ‘self-made’ writer, the only one of the various persons presented in this epitext who was not authorized and embodied through a relation with white subjectivity. Zhao continued to draw a very clear distinction between his work and that of the other “Negro poets”, castigating the latter for their familiar flaws of passivity and dependency on others. He was the only writer referred to as an “American Negro intellectual”, despite his hailing from Jamaica; his presence in America was also not mediated by slavery. He thus becomes an exemplary semi-fictionalized character in Zhao’s epitext who gestures towards the possibility of intellectual and literary ‘citizenship’ in the Chinese pantheon of writer–heroes.

⁷⁶ Chen, ‘*Xiaoshuo yuebao* (1921–1931) as a Cultural Mediator of Small Literatures in China’, 141.

⁷⁷ As Smethurst notes, “Claude McKay’s relationship to the Communist movement in the United States, Soviet Union, and Britain is well known” (see Smethurst, *The New Red Negro*, 20). This may have made him more appealing to Zhao who was a member of the leftist literary establishment but it is not clear whether Zhao knew about this.

Having stated in his introduction to *Zuijinde shijie wenxue* that the texts he was offering the reader were neither translations nor his own writing, Zhao appears to have presented an example of this in this final part of this epitext in which he freely borrowed or adapted lines from McKay's poems (almost certainly from Johnson's collection) without citing them and added his own lines, thereby creating an imaginative hybrid text in which the poet becomes a character who is both authored and authorized to speak by the paratext creator. Zhao has his McKay "sing":

Do not be discouraged, you are heroes. Africa's Black offspring, on Black land, should make some Black contributions.⁷⁸

The latter line is clearly based on the following lines from 'To the White Fiends':

I could match—out-match: am I not Africa's son,
Black of that black land where black deeds are done?⁷⁹

Here the speaker in the original poem is addressing the white enemy and emphasizing that he could "out-match" the whites as a son of Africa where evil deeds, as whites often believe, are done but Zhao made his McKay speak to other Blacks in an invocation of Black heroism. Here is perhaps another

⁷⁸ Zhao, 176–77. cf. “你们不要自馁，你们是英雄。非洲的黑人的子孙，在黑的地土上，应该做些黑的功绩。”又有几句话：“如果我们要死，不要像猪一般的死。被人家捉了去放在猪栏内，是我们的奇耻。同胞们啊！我们要向前迎敌，敌人虽多，我们仍要鼓起勇气，与他们拼一个你活我死！坟墓等待我们又有什么要紧？我们要与谋杀者死鬼，只有前进，没有退走！”

⁷⁹ Johnson, 178.

example of the acknowledgement of oppression, but again displaced onto the collective Black body, without acknowledging the white enemy directly. The character McKay then adds:

If we must die, let us not die like hogs, seized and trapped in a pigsty to our shame. Kinsmen!
We must advance and face the enemy. Even if there are many enemies, we must muster up
our courage. Join them in a life-and-death battle! What should we fear when the grave waits
for us? We must fight the murdering devils, only advancing and never retreating!⁸⁰

The enemy is seemingly a generic oppressor and the violent imagery of these lines supports Zhao's earlier assertions regarding McKay's fervour. In the final line of the epitext, Zhao's McKay becomes the first Black writer to reach the ranks of the esteemed writers of other oppressed people's literatures because his desire to fight the enemy is proof of his revolutionary consciousness, something almost never attributed to the irredeemably passive 'Black slave race'. Zhao conveyed this by asserting that McKay's sentiments really are "the voice of an oppressed nation that is worthy of admiration".⁸¹ McKay thus becomes the ultimate exception in Zhao's genealogy of Black literary despair, reminiscent of Lin and Wei's George Harris with the fire of revolution burning inside him.

⁸⁰ This is partially derived from following parts the second poem 'If we must die' (see Johnson, 178):

If we must die—let it not be like hogs
Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot...
Oh, Kinsmen! We must meet the common foe;
Though far outnumbered, let us still be brave,
And for their thousand blows deal one death-blow!
What though before us lies the open grave?
Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack,
Pressed to the wall, dying, but—fighting back!

⁸¹ Zhao, 177. cf. 这真是被压迫的民族可钦佩的呼声啊。

Through this articulation of consciousness, McKay also becomes a spokesperson for an imagined nation, thereby offering the possibility for a collective acknowledgement of Black historical subjectivity. However, Zhao's generally dismissive attitude towards Black writers and the exceptionalism of McKay, as well as, to a lesser extent, Dunbar, as yet hindered this collective achievement of subjectivity. The construction of luminaries like Hughes and Cullen as 'Black slave' figures and the complete absence of a reference to the Harlem Renaissance all but nullify any possibility for full recognition of African American literary modernism. Indeed, Zhao's emphasis on socio-political criteria as opposed to the formal aspects of the poems that he considered also anticipates the handling of Black works in the Mao era. Furthermore, it is not clear who McKay was giving voice to (Africans, African Americans or both) because of Zhao's initial move of severing 'African' literature from the continent of Africa and then going on to discuss African American poets. It is possible that he had in mind the terrifying image, well known to Chinese readers, of the 'slaves of a lost country', a homeless Black race spread across Africa and America, that had been deployed at various times throughout the prior thirty years to create a sense of indignation and fear in Chinese reading publics.

Although Zhao's description of McKay is seemingly a mixture of biographical fact and Zhao's own embellishments, and McKay's poetic lines are in part an act of ventriloquism on the part of Zhao, this should not obscure the significance of Zhao's attempt to incorporate McKay into the first-ever vision of world literature in China that recognized a role for 'Africa' or Blackness, despite the stifling legacy of the Black slave topos. Nevertheless, Zhao's severing of the African literary legacy from the continent itself through his co-opting of Schreiner (a white writer) and Black American poets highlights the formidable barriers to recognition for Africa and its writers. The demands of the epitextual form that Zhao was using to formulate his world literary framework may have necessitated a recourse to the use of the familiar to construct the entirely unfamiliar category of 'African' literature. Therefore, the persistent poverty of knowledge regarding Africa and the Black diaspora, as well as pervasive stereotyping in the media and other varieties of discourse, made the Black slave a readily available heuristic in the first explorations of Black literature — a move that would come to enable limited recognition for African American literature in the next decade but continued to render Africa, its writers and its liberation movements entirely opaque to Chinese readers.

2.3 ‘Widening the space’: Left-wing ideology and Black literature (1928–1933)

As Rana Mitter suggests, 1927 seems to mark “a turn towards the CCP on the part of many thoughtful Chinese worried about China’s future and the political crises that continued to tear it apart”.⁸² Whereas the May Fourth moment of the early 1920s had produced what Qi calls “*sturm und drang* in the culture and literature” that had “far-reaching repercussions” for the society at large, the ideological fault-lines were much clearer towards the end of the decade.⁸³ Qi states that “China was roughly divided into the Guomindang [Nationalist Party]-controlled cities, the Communist-controlled poor, rural areas, and the vast mountainous and border regions” that remained largely beyond the control of any particular party or government.⁸⁴ As Jonathan Spence notes, members of the May Fourth generation found themselves in new roles that often entailed making a clear commitment to the CCP, the Nationalists, or other kinds of postures that fall beyond the scope of this discussion.⁸⁵ On the literary front, the founding of the League of Left-Wing Writers in 1930 is most relevant to the

⁸² Mitter, *A Bitter Revolution*, 149. By the 1920s, China was riven by divisions as warlords in different regions battled each other (see Mitter, 36). The CCP and the Nationalist government under Chiang Kai-shek, with the support of Soviet advisors, had formed the First United Front and successfully united many of these local strongmen under their leadership (see Mitter, 143–44). Qi records that the “thousands of workers—the proletariat, many armed—had been mobilized by the Communists” to prepare the city of Shanghai for revolution in 1927. Chiang, however, was “worried about the infiltration of Communists within his ranks” and had the workers massacred and arrested. In subsequent years, the Nationalist Party would run “extermination campaigns” against the Communists “until 1937...when the Second Sino-Japanese War broke out” (see Qi, *Western Literature in China and the Translation of a Nation*, 88).

⁸³ Qi, 79.

⁸⁴ Qi, 89.

⁸⁵ Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 410.

present discussion as it represented the literary flank of the Communist movement in the big cities controlled by the Nationalist Party and was associated with a number of the May Fourth faction's most influential writers and translators of the prior decade.⁸⁶ In this section, I briefly examine the ideological factors that may have led to the interest shown in African American literature in particular by Zhao Jingshen and Yang Changxi in the late 1920s and early 1930s, especially insofar as this may be related to the Manichean ideological shift mentioned above. I adumbrate the discursive characteristics of what may be described as a transitional moment between Zhao's texts and Yang's study in 1933, as mediated through selected paratextual materials.

It would appear that both internal and external political events may have played a crucial role in the burgeoning interest in Black literature during this period (as, it will be argued, they would again in the 1950s). Qi notes that the League of Left-Wing Writers and "the Communist-sponsored art and literature activities" should also be viewed in "a much broader, international context of the socialistic movements (led by the Soviet Union and the Comintern) as well as national liberation wars that were sweeping across Asia and Africa like tidal

⁸⁶ Qi, 96. The League of Left Wing Writers (中国左翼作家联盟) was "undisputedly the most influential literary organization during the 1930s" and "although it was disbanded in 1936 in order to form the united front against the Japanese, its impact continued to be felt in the People's Republic of China all the way through the 1970s". It was dedicating to promoting "revolutionary literature" "that opposed traditional society and reactionary forces" as well as supporting "progressive young writers" (see Ying, *Historical Dictionary of Modern Chinese Literature*, 91–92).

waves”.⁸⁷ In 1922, members of the fledgling Chinese Communist Party, including Chen Duxiu (who had extensive links with the literary community) were present at the Fourth Congress of the Comintern, the same occasion on which the latter’s “Negro Commission” had given American Blacks a major role in helping to achieve self-determination for Africa.⁸⁸ By 1924, the Chinese Nationalists were “aligned with the Communist Party and the Soviet Union” in their desire to “unite the world proletariat and oppressed nations against imperialism”, and saw a potential leadership role for China in relation to the so-called *ruoxiao* or ‘small and weak’ nations particularly of Asia “amid a global zeitgeist of internationalism seen in the League of Nations, the Third Communist International, and international movements in Europe and Africa”.⁸⁹ In 1928, the Comintern ordered the Communist Party of the United States to support the right of Blacks in the southern states to pursue self-determination and linked this explicitly to such prospects for Black communities elsewhere in the world, despite vociferous opposition to this from American representatives at both the Fifth (in 1924) and the Sixth Congress of the Comintern (in 1928).⁹⁰ The Chinese delegates were certainly aware of these developments.

⁸⁷ Qi, 97.

⁸⁸ Klehr and Thompson, ‘Self-Determination in the Black Belt’, 358. Interestingly, Claude McKay was the speaker who delivered a “Report on the Negro Question” before the Congress (see Tillery, *Claude McKay*, 192). Party leaders Chen Duxiu and Qu Qiubai were themselves “major” translators (see Guo, ‘The Politics of Translation under Chairman Mao’s Leadership’, 48).

⁸⁹ Smith, ‘China as the Leader of the Weak and Small’, 37.

⁹⁰ Klehr and Thompson, 355–61.

Leaving aside the internal politics of the Comintern, it seems likely that the engagement of both the Chinese Nationalists and the Communists with its activities and policies may have spurred the interest in self-determination for African Americans that began to be expressed in articles that appeared in China in the late 1920s.⁹¹ Eber notes that the commentators Zuo Lin and Wu Yugan discussed the status of Black Americans since the end of slavery as early as 1926, noting that the emancipation movement of the 1920s aimed to end persistent unequal treatment and discrimination. Ge Suicheng, writing in 1927, raised a number of issues, such as the migration of Blacks from the American south to the north to meet the demand for labour after the First World War that in turn led to urbanization and the greater involvement of Blacks in “white society”, thereby creating greater demands for equality and causing social unrest.⁹² In 1929, Ge wrote approvingly of “writers like James Weldon Johnson, musicians like J. Rosamond Johnson..., artists like Henry O. Tanner..., and critics like W. E. B. Du Bois”, while noting that “one of the strongest movements was that of Marcus M. Garvey... and his Back-to-Africa national ... movement”. Eber states that “the Garvey movement was commented on at length by several Chinese writers, who were highly optimistic regarding the movement's future”, opining that “Marcus Garvey ... had proven to white society that blacks were not naturally inferior, and Garvey's Back-to-Africa

⁹¹ See footnote 3 in this chapter regarding socio-political interest in African Americans and their struggles in the late 1920s.

⁹² Eber, *Voices from Afar*, 31–32.

movement was the same as revolutionary movements elsewhere”. Wu Yugan added that “the foremost goal of the Garvey movement was to bring about an African renaissance” and drew parallels between Garvey and Gandhi, suggesting that the former had brought the elements of “self-respect” and “self-consciousness” to Black society which was thought to be typically deficient in these qualities. It is worth noting, once again, the marked discursive divergence in the depiction of Blacks in these texts in comparison with Zhao Jingshen’s ‘histories’, including their criticism of racial discrimination, perhaps suggestive of left-wing ideological influence; their emphasis on outstanding individuals as ‘saviours’ of the Black race is, however, reminiscent of Zhao’s exceptionalism.

Such writings may also explain the tendency to conflate Africans and African Americans that appears in Zhao Jingshen’s paratextual histories presented in the previous section as well as Yang Changxi’s study that will be dealt with below. This engagement, along with interactions with Black delegates at various international conferences (such as the First Conference of the League against Imperialism and for National Independence in 1927), may have led to minor shifts in the pervasive ideology of servility and lack of consciousness associated with Black people typified by powerful constructs such as the Black slave

topos.⁹³ Finally, as Smethurst suggests, “in addition to the theoretical connection of all colonial peoples, including African Americans, the Comintern and its member parties and their various cultural institutions made possible a practical literary connection of ‘oppressed peoples’ that had never existed before on such a large scale”.⁹⁴ Activities and networks of contacts centring on the Comintern, as well as its internationally circulated literary publications, may therefore have raised the profile of Black American writers in China. This did not, however, lead to significant translation activity, despite noteworthy events such as the warm reception for Langston Hughes by the “Shanghai literary world” (including Lu Xun) in 1933 and their purported interest in Claude McKay and Walter White’s works.⁹⁵

After Zhao’s writings on Black literature in the pages of *Xiaoshuo yuebao*, the next reference to such works appeared in December 1929 and seems to represent a growing acknowledgement, albeit limited, of African American political consciousness in the Chinese literary sphere. The notice concerned the publication of Anna Nussbaum’s *Afrika Singt (Africa Sings)*, a book that

⁹³ Petersson notes that Black representatives from a number of countries attended this conference, including Josiah Tshangana Gumede of South Africa’s African National Congress and “the Senegalese Lamine Senghor, the delegate of the Paris-based association *Committee in Defence of the Negro Race*. China sent twenty-five delegates, the second most after Germany. (see Petersson, ‘We Are Neither Visionaries Nor Utopian Dreamers’, 129–37).

⁹⁴ Smethurst, *The New Red Negro*, 8.

⁹⁵ Eber, 67. Smethurst points out that “the cultural apparatus of the Comintern, principally the International Union of Revolutionary Writers (IURW) and its journal *International Literature*, brought the work of Langston Hughes, Sterling Brown, and Richard Wright to a large new foreign audience during the 1930s” (see Smethurst, 41). This may have been the source of the interest in Hughes, and later, Wright.

included German translations of many prominent Black American poets' works.⁹⁶ The notice linked what it called 'New Negro poetry' (its title) with new changes in the thinking of Black people after the First World War; it mentions Marcus Garvey as a leader who "recognizes the times" and "knows that the weak and small and the oppressed can also achieve victory and superiority if they would only unite and heighten their calls for survival and freedom to develop".⁹⁷ According to Zhang Weilian who authored this brief piece, Nussbaum's collection presented the "voices" of Black people concerning "memories of past events, their animosity towards how whites have insulted them, and their complaints concerning how whites converted them into Christians and then did not treat them as such" as well as "their tone of threat and defiance against whites".⁹⁸ Juxtaposed with Zhao's epitexts, this piece acknowledges a broader consciousness among "educated Blacks" from whose ranks these poets came and is much more explicitly critical towards whites. Nevertheless, Garvey emerges as a rather exceptional figure, the description of him reminiscent of Zhao's praise of McKay; it also seems likely that Zhang's

⁹⁶ Nussbaum was a journalist, translator and activist whose correspondence with several prominent Black American writers and intellectuals "produced a flood of translations and publications" at a time when such works were largely unknown in Europe (see Wipplinger, *The Jazz Republic*, 178–80).

⁹⁷ Zhang, 'Heirende xin shi' [New Negro poetry], 1950. cf. 自从欧战后黑人的思想也新了许多，他们现在也有了组成的运动，领袖是格尔飞 (Markus Garvey (sic.)), 他是个认识时代的人，他知道弱小的被压迫的也能够得到权利和势力，只要他们能够团结起来，提高着要求生存和自由发展的呼声。Zhang Weilian went on to become one of China's foremost translators and scholars of German literature (see 'Zhang Weilian', <https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E5%BC%A0%E5%A8%81%E5%BB%89/4595307?fr=aladdin>, last accessed 2 May 2019).

⁹⁸ Zhang, 'Heirende xin shi' [New Negro poetry], 1950. cf. 在这本诗集里我们可以听到黑人种种的呼声，如：对于往事的回忆，对于白人轻侮他们的仇视，对于白人感化他们信仰基督面并不以信徒相待过的申诉。此外更有对于白人威胁和反抗的语气。

interest in these poems was at least partially motivated by the institutional approbation conferred on them by Nussbaum's translation and publication in the language in which the Chinese translator was a specialist. Ironically, the notice ends with Zhang's translations of the German versions of two of Langston Hughes's poems in the collection but the latter's name is not mentioned. The omission of Hughes's name and the fact that they had to be translated from the German version perhaps reinforce my earlier point that he was, as yet, not well known in China.⁹⁹

The acknowledgement of the importance of certain Black leaders may have spurred a greater openness to translating Black works. While full-length translations of novels by African American writers remained unheard of in China, another significant development may have been the non-fiction translation of Booker T. Washington's *Up From Slavery* in 1932. Washington had been known in Chinese intellectual circles as early as 1906 and there was considerable interest in his educational programs at Tuskegee.¹⁰⁰ Interestingly, the translator Xiang Yuancun, about whom relevant biographical information is scarce, called the book *Heinu chenggongzhe zizhuan* ['The autobiography of a Black slave success'] rather than simply translating the title of the book directly.

⁹⁹ The two poems are 'I, too, Sing America' and 'Negro'.

¹⁰⁰ Eber, *Voices from Afar*, 4.

While a full discussion of this text and its peritexts is not possible here, it is worth pointing out that Xiang, in his foreword to the book, asked rhetorically how Washington could not be called a “success”, given that he had done the other half of the task that Lincoln had begun by freeing the Black slaves.¹⁰¹ In addition, both Yang Hengyu and Pan Wenan, the authors of two of the four forewords to this book, compared Washington favourably to Gandhi and praised his efforts.¹⁰² Pan Wenan was an editor and prominent figure in professional education circles and Yang, who claimed to be a friend of the translator, signed his foreword as a member of an educational organization, suggesting that Washington’s educational activities may have accounted for their interest in this publication.¹⁰³ In all of these discussions, although Washington also emerges as an exceptional ‘saviour’ of his people, the transformation from the sense of pervasive and contemptible docility, that had been attributed to Blacks prior to the late 1920s, to a recognition of their status as an oppressed people waging a struggle for freedom who are capable of producing great leaders, is noteworthy.

Ultimately, however, despite the increased attention to African American struggles and the unprecedented praise of various prominent leaders, as well as

¹⁰¹ Xiang, ‘Yi xu’ [Translator’s foreword], 2. cf. 解放黑奴的大事，林肯做了前半段，那后半段却是蒲寇华盛顿做的，这可不叫他做成功人吗？

¹⁰² Yang, ‘Yang xu’ [Yang’s foreword], 1; Pan, ‘Pan xu’ [Pan’s foreword], 1.

¹⁰³ Tong, ‘Pan Wenan yu Guomin shiqi *Shenbao*. *Guohuo zhoukan yanjiu*’ [Pan Wenan and the Republican Period’s “Shen Daily Guohou Weekly” Research], 103.

the stirrings of interest in Black literary works, only the translation of Maran's *Batouala*, a work subsumed under the category of French literature, was published. The novel was rendered in Chinese by noted translator of French literature and novelist Li Jieren in 1928.¹⁰⁴ Although, as Kenny Kwok-kwan Ng states, "the young Li Jieren should be considered as an advocate of the spirit of May Fourth modernity", his reasons for translating Maran's work seem to be intensely personal and literary rather than political in any sense.¹⁰⁵ In his translator's introduction, he self-consciously disavowed any "preconceived ideas" such as the fact that "a Black person wrote the book" or that "it is a book expressing the grievances of the oppressed Black people in central Africa" in explaining his motivation for translating the book.¹⁰⁶ Instead, he claimed that it was simply because of the "realistic", "profound", and "natural" depiction in the novel. Despite this disavowal, Li's need to explain his motivation in these terms may show an awareness of the significance of race in a global resistance to oppression and is perhaps suggestive of a growing recognition of the struggles of Africans as well as a willingness to take the literary merits of the works of writers of African descent seriously. He also claimed that the book's status as the 1921 Prix Goncourt winner and the sensation that it caused did not play a

¹⁰⁴ Ying, *Historical Dictionary of Modern Chinese Literature*, 98.

¹⁰⁵ Ng, *The Lost Geopoetic Horizon of Li Jieren*, 13.

¹⁰⁶ Li, 'Fanyi Baduyana yihou' 翻译霸都亚纳以后 [After translating *Batouala*], 1. cf. 我之翻译《霸都亚纳》，并没有这样的成见：以为它是一部黑人做的书，一部为非洲中部被压迫的黑人鸣不平的书...简单言之，我之翻译它，实在因了感觉那描写的真实、深切、自然...也没有这样的成见：以为它是受过法国龚古尔学会文学奖金...曾经轰动过一时的书...

role (in contrast to Mao Dun's profile). Although no other significant literary works by Black authors appear to have been translated until 1933 when an extract from Walter White's novel *The Fire in the Flint* appeared in the journal *Wenxue* ('Literature'), Li's comments may also signal the first stirrings of a shift in the how Africans and Black authors were perceived in 1928.¹⁰⁷ Li recorded that he had also met Maran in Paris in 1924; just as in the case of the Comintern, such personal interactions may have played a crucial role in shifting perspectives.¹⁰⁸

2.4 'Towards a new view': Yang Changxi's pioneering 'Negro literature' and the Black slave topos¹⁰⁹

Since the leaders of the League of Left-wing Writers were prominent Communist Party members, it is not surprising that its agenda was strongly ideological and that it "soon engaged in ideological fights with 'fellow-travellers' and enemies of all stripes, within and without".¹¹⁰ One such 'enemy', whose works and legacy have been marginalized by the League and its successors in the PRC since the 1930s, would produce the first-ever significant

¹⁰⁷ Eber, 130.

¹⁰⁸ See Li, 5–6.

¹⁰⁹ I have chosen to translate *heiren* as 'Negro' since Yang frequently used the transliteration for this word *nigeluoren* throughout his text, perhaps influenced by its frequent appearance in left-wing publications internationally, and made a point of glossing it in the very first line of his text (see Yang, *Heiren wenxue* [Negro literature], 59. It is also the translation favoured by Han Han who republished the text in a 2014 collection of Yang's works, my primary reference for this section.

¹¹⁰ Qi, *Western Literature in China and the Translation of a Nation*, 97.

study of Black literature in Chinese literary history: Yang Changxi.¹¹¹

Ironically, despite Yang's association with the Nationalist Literature and Art movement so despised by the League, the scholar Han Han claims that Yang's study epitomizes the left-wing perspective of the period, both in China and internationally. Focusing on the first two parts of Yang's lengthy text that are directly comparable to Zhao's, this section will consider how aspects such as the Black slave topos were modulated or contested by this left-wing ideology and how acknowledgement of Black subjectivity and nationhood as well as the literary modernism of Black writers finally became possible if limited in scope.

In the opening section of Yang Changxi's text (entitled 'Negro Poetry'), the author seems to have had in the mind the pervasive view of the people whose works he was about to discuss and thus seen the need to offer an explanation for their collective failure through the long period of slavery, often attributed to their innate racial weaknesses in discourses stretching back to the writings of the Qing reformers, to mount "a unified resistance" against, and

¹¹¹ Han, 'Cong *Heiren wenxue* lun zaoqi Meiguo wenhua yanjiu zuoyi shijiao' [The left-wing view of early American literature studies reflected in 'Negro literature'], 95. Han characterizes Yang and his work as follows: 杨昌溪虽然在1930年代参与了“民族主义文艺”创作...且受到过鲁迅的点名批评。但他在1920年代末期却是一位与左翼文坛有密切联系的作家与翻译家，甚至直至1931年...因此，这本《黑人文学》被收录于以左翼文学作品为主的“一角丛书”，亦不足为奇了。

[Although Yang Changxi participated in the creation of 'Nationalist Literature and Art' works in the 1930s... and was directly criticized by Lu Xun, he was a writer-translator who was closely associated with the left-wing literary establishment until the end of the 1920s, even up to 1931. Therefore, it is not strange that 'Negro literature' was included in the 'Yijiao congshu', a left-wing oriented literary series.]

“denouncement” of, white oppression.¹¹² Instead of referring to race, Yang argued that a “lack of knowledge” led them to view whites as a “privileged class”, who were “born of God to oppress them”, and to see “suffering” as their “fate”.¹¹³ This position implicitly shifts their status from irredeemably slavish to redeemable through knowledge. Yang added that since the “human race” are “wise and emotional animals”, they would “naturally” react to ongoing “provocation”, and that this was the case with Blacks.¹¹⁴ Yang’s statement here again seems to have been made to counter a deterministic view of innate racial temperaments and to enfold Blacks in a more inclusive view of humanity. Rather, Yang suggested that the fault lay in socio-economic and historical conditions and he repeated a contention that had become popular in the commentaries that had begun to appear in the late 1920s: although Lincoln had formally given the Black slaves their freedom, most still suffered by being forced to work and suffer as ‘wage slaves’ in order to survive.¹¹⁵ He added that this was despite the fact that many had become “obedient citizens” through an education system “controlled by white Americans”. Yang concluded the section by asserting that the slaves had been taught to be “docile” through the long

¹¹² Yang, ‘*Heiren wenxue*’ [Negro literature], 59. cf. 因此在悠长的奴隶制中没有团集的反抗和控诉。

¹¹³ Yang, 59. cf. 但为了知识缺乏的关系...他们感觉到白人是上帝生出来压迫他们的特权阶级；他们认为自己的痛苦是命运的驱使...

¹¹⁴ Yang, 59. cf. 但是人类种是有智慧和感情的动物，对于一切所给予的刺激，也自然地发生了一种反应。

¹¹⁵ Yang, 59. cf. 虽然林肯在形式上给了黑奴们以伟大的自由，虽然在美国白人统治的教育下，有许多黑人已成了顺民，但大多数的黑人仍要为工钱而做奴隶，而受痛苦。Eber also mentions this in her discussion of Wu Yugan’s ideas (see Eber, 30).

years of living under the “despotism of the Americans” but that, in recent years, amid the “rise of workers’ movements” in the US, “Negroes” now had their own “professional organizations”. Furthermore, they were pressing for their own independent country, especially through the advocacy of “Black intellectuals”; not only had “national awakening” become a priority but efforts were being made to advance their cause internationally.¹¹⁶ Yang thus transformed Black slaves into members of the international working class and situated them in terms of an internationalist Comintern-inspired agenda.¹¹⁷

Yang also felt compelled to explain the lack of “national consciousness” attributed to Blacks; he said that it had been “worn down” by religion, claiming that “the Americans had exploited Christianity” in order to “narcotize” Blacks. Yang therefore refigured Christianity as a tool of class oppression rather than exhorting Black people themselves for believing it, a distinctly different approach to earlier writers. He added that they “could not but be converted to” superstitions and pray for freedom from their “shackles” when they experienced “limitless suffering” with no time for “consolation” or “liberation”.¹¹⁸ Yang

¹¹⁶ Yang, 66. cf. 委实，他们过去的许多年代是在美国人的淫威下养成了驯良的奴隶...但是近年来因为美国新兴工人运动的勃起，尼格罗人已经有了职业组织。而且认为必须有一个独立的国家来解决他们的一切，更加以黑人的知识分子的提倡，不但民族的觉醒已成了当前的急务，而且他们还在国际工作方面努力。

¹¹⁷ The notion of a right to self-determination for African Americans was deeply divisive and controversial in America at the time.

¹¹⁸ Yang, 59–60. cf. 黑奴们的民族意识早在奴隶生活中消磨尽了。更兼以美国人利用基督教来麻醉他们，所以，当他们在人间获得了无上的痛苦，而没有安慰和解放时，他们不得不皈依在神的迷信上，不得不祈祷着早日脱离人间一切的桎梏...

then cited their singing of ‘spirituals’ and ‘work songs’ as evidence for this yearning to escape to an illusory “heaven” and “forget” their “present hardship”.¹¹⁹ He also provided an in-text translation of several of their lyrics, legitimizing them as “acute” expressions of “resistance” and “revolution” emanating from the “nation”, thereby breaking with the May Fourth-type elitism of previous writer–translators and showing what Han asserts to be an indisputable “left-wing” “underclass consciousness”, discernible throughout the text as a whole, that “transcends country and ethnicity”.¹²⁰ Yang later extended his radical departure from the image of servile Black slaves crying to heaven by going so far as to suggest that they had “never truly believed in God” but that whites had used religion to “soothe” the slaves’ “rebellious hearts”, as though submissiveness were not their innate condition.¹²¹ Yang also incorporated statistics to prove that African Americans were turning away from Christianity.

Having challenged key aspects of what I have called the Black slave topos in the first section of his discussion, Yang turned to the role of the poets of the “national movement”, and, without disputing the importance of the

¹¹⁹ Yang, 59–60. cf. 在工作时他们在歌中幻想着天堂而想忘去当前的痛苦...

¹²⁰ Yang, 59. cf. 在他们的劳动歌中已经很尖锐地表现着他们的反抗，和那民族出发的革命。Han states the following: 但不可否认的是，《黑人文学》的左翼视角反映了它的底层意识，这是超越国家、民族的人性视角... (see Han, ‘Cong Heiren wenxue lun zaoqi Meiguo wenhua yanjiu zuoyi shijiao’ [The left-wing view of early American literature studies reflected in ‘Negro literature’], 96.

¹²¹ Yang, 60. cf. 其实他们并不是真实地信仰上帝，这种基督教的麻醉剂是美国人利用来缓和他们的反抗心...

abovementioned songs, suggested that the works of these poets “that awaken the nation” were more artistic than those “coarse”, “weary”, and “hopeless” pieces.¹²² He then listed McKay, Cullen, Dunbar, Hughes, Lewis Alexander, Jean Toomer, James B. Corrothers, and James Madison Bell as examples, thereby not only acknowledging the importance of the Harlem Renaissance generation collectively in contrast to Zhao but including poets of prior generations, such as Corrothers and Bell, of whose era the latter had been entirely dismissive. Yang provided brief biographies for each of them, mentioned their most noteworthy works, and added translations of a few that he considered illustrative of important issues.

He began with McKay, whom he described as the “most famous” Black American poet (perhaps because of his comparatively high international profile in the socialist world) and alluded to a line of the same poem that Zhao had lauded.¹²³ The original line reads: “If we must die—let it not be like hogs...”. Yang characterized the theme of McKay’s poetry as a wish to die “for the victory of the nation” rather than in the manner of “what are called a herd of beasts”. Despite McKay’s supposed fame, Yang’s discussion of him is

¹²² Yang, 66. cf. 因此，这一批民族运动的人员和诗歌中尖锐的作民族唤醒的作品，便是一种在思想上附饰着艺术的表现，并不是那门粗野的，萎靡的，没有出路的歌词所可比拟了的。

¹²³ Yang, 67. cf. 在美国黑人诗中，他算是顶著名的，在他的诗中他们所要的是为民族而战的胜利之死，并不是如被称的兽群之死。

relatively brief, perhaps suggesting that Yang considered him to be relatively well known already.

In considering which poems to translate for his readers, Yang appears to emphasize the degree to which the work expressed a nationalistic consciousness, usually indicated through expressions of defiance. This becomes apparent in his comparison of McKay's poetry to Alexander's; he provided a translation of the first stanza of the latter's 'The Dark Brother', insisting that, although Alexander had not published many poems, his "roar" of defiance for his people is even "more intense" than McKay's.¹²⁴ In a manner reminiscent of Zhao, Yang also appears to have manipulated the translation of the stanza, and omitted the somewhat sentimental second stanza, in order to substantiate his reading of the poem's stridency. The opening line of the original poem reads: " 'Lo, I am Black but I am comely too'"; Yang's translation is: 'Lo, I am Black but I am also a person'.¹²⁵ This line appears to be the beginning of an argument for equality, rather than an acknowledgement of the beauty of Black people, a theme emphasized in the following lines from the second stanza of the original text: "Casting an eye of love upon my face, /Seeing a newer light within my eyes, /A rarer beauty in your brother race..." Yang seems to have wanted to

¹²⁴ Yang, 67. cf. 虽然亚历山大的诗很少, 但《黑兄弟》...一诗却是更比墨克开更强烈的为他自己的民族而狂吼了。

¹²⁵ Yang, 67. cf. 哟, 我是黑, 但我也个人...

focus the theme of the poem on a common humanity as an argument for equality. This is also suggested by the changes to line 5 in the first stanza (“...that you/And I may stand within the world's full view”). Yang’s version may be translated as: “So you and I can receive equal treatment in the world”.¹²⁶ The final two lines of the translation speak of “holding a banner high” whose “waving overthrows all opposition”, more strident than the original (“Holding a banner high whose floating braves/ The opposition of the tried untrue”).¹²⁷

As if further to highlight his privileging of revolutionary sentiment over aesthetics, Yang, despite acknowledging Cullen’s success as a poet, did not include a translation of any of his works, based on his assumption that most of Cullen’s poems either “praise the beauty of Black girls” or are the stories of “Indian” (native American) girls.¹²⁸ Continuing in the vein of only singling out the works that conveyed the most revolutionary fervour, Yang’s brief section on Dunbar, a relatively pivotal figure in the history of Black American literature, focused largely on his poem ‘Ode to Ethiopia’, noting that the “attitude” expressed is “fiercer than quite a few other poets”; Yang characterized the remainder of his works as largely “purely artistic”, lacking “any expression”

¹²⁶ Yang, 67. cf. 那你我可以在世上得着平等的待遇...

¹²⁷ Yang, 67. cf. 高高的撑起一枝旗帜/她的飘荡打倒一切人的反对...

¹²⁸ Yang, 67. cf. 他在诗方面是比较的成功。然而他大部分的诗是歌颂黑人姑娘的美和印第安人姑娘的故事。

with regard to “the enlightenment of national self-consciousness”.¹²⁹ As though to accentuate the difference he had already sketched between the poems that expressed the seeming hopelessness of the situation and those filled with a revolutionary consciousness, Yang then translated a line from Corrother’s poem ‘At the Closed Gate of Justice’, in which, mired in “despondency”, the speaker asks, “Alas! Lord God! What ill have we done?”¹³⁰ Without questioning the legitimacy of the assertions made in the poem, Yang opined that this sort of sentiment “never has anything enlightening concerning a way out” of this predicament.¹³¹

After dealing with Bell’s work ‘An Anniversary Poem Entitled the Progress of Liberty’, about which Yang claimed that the poet had insisted that “freedom is the demand of every nation, especially the enslaved Negroes who must fight for this treasure”, and Toomer’s oeuvre, concerning which he stated that the poet “makes the greatest effort to write about the lives of the Negro nation in America” as well as fervently expressing his sympathy for the slaves, Yang finally turned to Langston Hughes.¹³² In his view, Hughes, along with McKay,

¹²⁹ Yang, 68. cf. ...态度是比好几位诗人还强烈。其余的作品便是纯艺术方面的居多，在民族自觉的启发上没有如何的表现。

¹³⁰ Calverton, ‘The Growth of Negro Literature’, 105.

¹³¹ Yang, 68. cf. 他却在一切失望后去问上帝：“呜呼，上帝，我们竟造下了什么罪？...”并不曾有着出路的启示。For the original text of the poem, see Johnson, 79–80.

¹³² Yang, 68. cf. 在《自由的行程》...一诗中他[Bell]把自由认为是各民族所应当要求的，尤其是在奴隶制中的尼格罗民族是必须争取的珍宝。...在著作中它极力的把尼格罗民族在美国的生活写出，对奴隶的同情是强烈地呈现。

was a “poet and novelist” of the “faction” of “fierce revolutionary literature”.¹³³ After providing a brief biography of the writer and mentioning his recent visit to China, Yang listed two of his noteworthy collections *The Weary Blues* and the *Fine Clothes to the Jew*, and offered a full-text translation of ‘I, too, Sing America’.¹³⁴ Below his translation, Yang commented that the poem reveals the “contempt” that whites have for Blacks, and the “oppression” visited on Blacks who “cannot help but dream” the words “I, too, am America”.¹³⁵ At this juncture, Yang made what amounts to an extraordinary claim in light of his acknowledgement of this racial contempt and his repeated references to whites as oppressors. He stated that the earlier contempt of Europeans and Americans for Blacks had changed to “admiration” because the poems of “educated Blacks” had opened up an “unprecedented realm in lyric poetry”.¹³⁶ Yang, like Zhang Weilian, subsequently noted that Hughes’s abovementioned poem, along with ‘Negro’, had appeared in Nussbaum’s *Africa Sings*; he mentioned that the book features works from both America and Africa and claimed that its publication “proves that the Black nation has already opened up a new era in the eyes of whites”. This claim is significant as it is probably the first time that a

¹³³ Yang, 68. cf. 休士是现存的于墨开同属于激烈革命文学一排的诗人和小说家...

¹³⁴ Yang incorrectly translated ‘The Weary Blues’ as ‘Pilaode shuishou’ or ‘The weary sailor’. He seemed to have drawn on his biographical knowledge of Hughes’ stint as a sailor, also mentioned here, in attempting to understand “blues”.

¹³⁵ Yang, 69. cf. 在休士的《我，也是》一诗中，可以看见白人对黑人的仇视，大约为了白人对黑人的仇视和压迫，使他们不得不梦想“我，也是亚美利加”。

¹³⁶ Yang, 69. cf. 关于受过教育的黑人所写的抒情诗，在抒情诗中展开了抒情诗未有的境界，所以欧美的人已由早日仇视的心理一变而为尊仰了。所以《婀娜奴司包母》(Ann (sic.) Nussbaum) 就近搜集了亚非利加和亚美利加两洲散布的黑人的诗歌译成了德文...便可以证明在白人眼中的黑人民族已经开拓了新的时代。

Chinese writer–translator acknowledged African and African American literature collectively in this manner. Black literature was finally being imbued with the transformational powers, usually only attributed to Euro-American and Russian literature. However, radical though Yang may have been in inaugurating a hitherto unimaginable view of Black literature when juxtaposed with others such as Zhao Jingshen, these claims appear to be almost naïve and highlight what remains pointedly absent from his discussion: a critique of the racialized thinking that undergirded and often legitimated the actions of the oppressors.

In the final paragraphs of his section on poetry, Yang’s sympathy with an emphatically left-wing agenda becomes increasingly apparent. He suggested that the need for a “free and independent country” of their own (a promulgated goal of the Comintern) had already been conveyed by nineteenth-century Black writers.¹³⁷ He referred to the establishment of the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People, led by Garvey and W.E.B. Du Bois, as evidence for his assertion that Black people had recognized that their time had come and that ‘small and weak’ nations needed to unite to strive for freedom

¹³⁷ Yang, 70. cf. 在这一群诗人中，已经在诗歌里呈现了那于十九世纪不同的作品他们已经感觉到了需要一个独立而自由的国家，在格飞 [Garvey]和波依士 [Du Bois] ... 已经证明黑人是认识了他们所处的时代，认识了弱小民族要团结起来求生存和自由独立的权力和势力的必要。不过，这一群大半是知识分子居多，还不会从实际工作中去得到革命的体验，仅是在诗歌中放出了民族觉醒的信号罢了。

and independence (again strongly reminiscent of Zhang Weilian's comments). He opined that their potential weakness at that point in time was that their organizations were still dominated by intellectuals and that the signals of national awakening remained confined to poetry. Yang also noted that European and American critics tended to focus on the lyric poetry and pieces about scenery while neglecting the more nationalistic works.¹³⁸ He linked this specifically, in the case of America, to a fear that the dream of an independent country could be achieved "under their [the whites'] rule". Reprising some of the themes expressed in the introductory sections of the work and weaving these together with a more specifically political agenda, Yang suggested that whites who "employed religion as an opiate" viewed 'Negro' hymns as indicative of the status of Blacks as a type of 'chosen people' whose "Canaan" or 'promised land' would ironically never materialize because it was pre-ordained to be under white control and whose works were therefore nothing more than a form of "spiritual consolation".¹³⁹ To address the indifference of white Americans to the legitimate desire for a homeland, which, as Yang saw it, had been prompted by the acceptance by Blacks of white religious hypocrisy (highlighted in a more general sense by Zhang) implied in the notion of a chosen people without a

¹³⁸ Yang, 70. cf. ...在欧美一般赞美黑人文学作品的人都仅注目在他们的抒情诗，和写景诗，其它的作品因为都是以民族主义立场的，所以在统治亚美利加的他们，对于作品中民族主义的歌颂和梦想的独立国家，深恐在他们的统治内实现。

¹³⁹ Yang, 70. cf. ...在以宗教为麻醉剂的白人看来，黑人最是上帝可爱的选民了。然而他们所梦想的迦南，上帝是永不会为他们拣选；既是唯一的祖国亚非利加也已经为上帝特别生下的白人宰割了。...从黑人对于宗教的虚伪接受来证明，所谓赞美诗不过一时的精神慰藉...

promised land, Yang closed the section by ‘quoting’ the words of V.F. Calverton, a prominent white American Marxist who had published the influential book *An Anthology of American Negro Literature* (1930).¹⁴⁰ He stated that Calverton believed that “the starting principle of Negro literature” was to serve the “consciousness of the nation” and “eulogize” its “suffering”, not merely to produce “art for art’s sake”, and that the “rise” of this literature and its future maturation would “accomplish the rise of the nation as a whole”.¹⁴¹ Yang, seemingly deploying Calverton as an authority, then ended the section on a critical note; he insisted that it was clear that Blacks had to focus on achieving “freedom” and “liberation” and avoid “contemptible boasting” of the sort he implied Langston Hughes was guilty of in his poem ‘Negro’.¹⁴² He also provided a translation of a section of the poem to illustrate his point, seeming to take issue with Hughes’ articulation of the role that Black people had played in what is usually considered ‘white’ history.¹⁴³ Instead, he concluded, drawing

¹⁴⁰ I have used single quotation marks here because I have not been able to locate this quotation in the source text. Only the final lines of Calverton’s introduction appear to be a possible direct source for the last sentence of the Chinese version: “It is a growth that is as yet unfinished...It indicates more than the rise of a literature. It marks the rise of an entire people” (see Calverton, ‘The Growth of Negro Literature’, 105).

¹⁴¹ Yang, 70. cf. 所以乃至美国，无产派的批评家加尔佛吞 (V.F. Calverton) 在他的《美国黑人文学选集》...引言中也认为“黑人文学出发的观点是民族的，而是为民族的自觉而创作为民族的痛苦而歌吟，并不是为艺术而艺术。而且黑人文学之兴起，将来会著文学之成长而达到全民族的兴起。”

¹⁴² Yang, 70–71. cf. ...是可以证实黑人对于将来的出路是必须要先作重民族的自由和解放，并不是如那歌中显示的：[Chinese translation of ‘Negro’] ...一样卑鄙地夸耀...

¹⁴³ Yang translated the following section of ‘Negro’ (see Hughes, *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes*, 24). He omitted the lines on ragtime, lynching, and colonial victimization:

I am a Negro:
Black as the night is Black,
Black like the depths of my Africa.

I’ve been a slave:
Caesar told me to keep his door-steps clean.
I brushed the boots of Washington.

ostensibly on African American philosopher and literary critic Alain Locke who wrote of the emergence of the “New Negro” in 1925, they should pay attention to the works that revealed the dynamic “pulse” of this new figure and were inspiring the “Negro renaissance”.¹⁴⁴ Here, Yang breaks with Calverton’s view that the “new literature of the Negro in America does not constitute a renaissance” by implying that this renaissance is viable through the emergence of Locke’s eponymous ‘New Negro’. Returning to my contestation of Eber’s argument, this appears to be the only meaningful acknowledgement of a renaissance in Black literature in this period.

While this discussion of Yang Changxi’s text has only focused on its first two parts, it is important to note that the remaining two sections, concerning novels, short stories and plays, could also have been included here as they are unprecedented in terms of the sheer range of writers and works discussed.¹⁴⁵

Despite Han’s contention that Yang’s book’s “flaw” is its tendency towards “extreme views” and “personal emotion”, it would remain the only substantial

I’ve been a worker:
Under my hand the pyramids arose.
I made mortar for the Woolworth Building...

¹⁴⁴ Yang, 71. cf. 而是要从作品中看出“新尼格罗 (New Negro) 底脉搏的突跃”, 启示“尼格罗民族之复兴” (Negro Renaissance)。Locke published the anthology *The New Negro* in 1925, “which became the manifesto of the Harlem Renaissance, or as some critics prefer to call it, the New Negro Movement” (Introductory note to Locke, ‘Enter the New Negro’, 1). Han suggests that Yang’s text should be seen alongside within the outpouring of works such as Locke’s during this period which highlight the international focus on Black literature (see Han, 94).

¹⁴⁵ They include writers such as Du Bois, Walter White and performers such as Paul Robeson. Yang also provided a lengthy summary of the plot of *Batouala* and quoted Maran’s introduction at length.

work on Black American literature for almost thirty years in China.¹⁴⁶ For the purposes of the present work, the value of Yang's work is not in the impact it was to have on translation activity or institutional recognition for Black literature; it is doubtful whether it had much effect, given the disdain for Yang in the literary establishment that resulted in his contributions as a whole remaining relatively obscure, as well as the suppressive effect of the ideological legacy of the Black slave topos. Instead, it offers a unique opportunity to trace a shift, inaugurated by left-wing ideology and international cosmopolitanism, in the representation of Black writers and their literatures in a context still powerfully influenced by racialized thinking. This shift seems to have begun with Zhao's paratextual histories in the late 1920s, and illustrates the increasing incompatibility of the benighted Black slave figure with the emergent left-wing literary agenda. While a frank dissection of racism and its relationship to oppression remained elusive, Shih's "bifurcation" of the "colonial West", manifest in daily incidents of discrimination in cities like Shanghai, and the "metropolitan West", that had fuelled the desires of those in the literary sphere, had seemingly become impossible by the time of Yang's writing and the oppressor, defined in racial terms, could be castigated far more directly than during the May Fourth period. Left-wing ideology also enabled Black

¹⁴⁶ Han, 'Cong *Heiren wenxue* lun zaoqi Meiguo wenhua yanjiu zuoyi shijiao' [The left-wing view of early American literature studies reflected in 'Negro literature'], 98. cf. 书中一些因个人感情而阐发的过激言论, 是《黑人文学》的一大缺陷。

modernism and the renaissance of which Eber writes to be valorised, albeit only insofar as it expressed the appropriate revolutionary sentiments. Yang countered Zhao's 'genealogy' of poetic failure, by contesting the supposed innate docility and religiosity of Black slaves and refiguring their spirituals and work songs as legitimate expressions of indignation and a longing for freedom and self-determination. The exceptionalism accorded to various writers and political figures is also greatly diminished in Yang's work; instead, the peoples of Africa and its diaspora appear to have finally achieved the status of fellow 'oppressed peoples' or 'small and weak nations' with the caveat that, in the American case, their struggle was still confined to an educated elite. Finally, it must be emphasized that both Zhao and Yang were peripheral figures who seemed to have had their own reasons for choosing to introduce Chinese readers to these writers and their literatures; their interests did not conform with the priorities of the Chinese literary establishment which would remain largely indifferent to Black literature for a further twenty-five years.

Part 2:

The early to middle years of the Maoist period (1949–1965)

Chapter 3

From *The Path of Thunder* to *Mine Boy*: The paratextual presentation of Peter Abrahams's works in communist China (1952–1959)

3.1 'Travelling via Moscow': Pingming Press and the arrival of *The Path of Thunder* in China

Recent scholarship has tended to view the translation of Black African works during the 1950s and 1960s under the new Chinese regime as best understood within the framework of what Shu-mei Shih calls “Afro-Asian Third World solidarity”.¹ However, as I will suggest over the next few chapters, the periodization of this cultural and political formation in the Chinese context may need to be reconsidered. In this chapter, I discuss the debut of the Chinese version of Peter Abrahams's *The Path of Thunder*, the first-ever translation of a novel by a Black African author. I show that its publication predated the articulation of this framework, and had little to do with the setting of the work or the provenance of its writer. Rather, like the Black literature translated in the Republican era which had been initiated by relatively peripheral figures such as Zhao Jingshen and Yang Changxi, it was the idiosyncratic product of the efforts of a little-known translator at a small-scale yet influential private publisher

¹ Shih, ‘Race and Revolution’, 159.

called Pingming Press (‘Pingming chubanshe’) in Shanghai that would cease to exist within a few years. Under the leadership of the renowned writer Ba Jin, the publishing house, founded in December of 1949 (just two months after the establishment of the PRC in October), both anticipated and participated in the surge in translation of Soviet/Russian literature that was inspired by Mao Zedong’s pro-Soviet policy in the early 1950s.² The current section thus refers to a brief period of time in which translators and publishers were responding to “the general political direction ...of ‘learning from the Soviet Union’”.³ In this context, I argue that *The Path of Thunder* was translated because of its status as a modern work from beyond the socialist bloc that appeared to have garnered the thoroughgoing approbation of Soviet institutional authorities rather than as an ‘African’ text; indeed, in contrast to works published later in the decade (to which Shih’s formulation alludes), its African origins and authorship were virtually negated by its paratextual apparatus. Furthermore, unlike the profiles of writers and ‘sample’ translations of their works produced by Zhao and Yang that were considered in the last chapter, the translation of this novel was not portrayed as an effort to introduce Chinese readers to ‘Black’ or ‘African’ literature. A further contrast may be drawn between the way in which Zhao and

² Ba Jin, who also came of age in the May Fourth era, was a celebrated writer, translator, publisher, and editor. He also held “many political as well as professional titles”, including president of the Chinese Writers’ Association (see Ying, *Historical Dictionary of Modern Chinese Literature*, 6).

³ Volland, ‘Translating the Socialist State’, 60. Mao proclaimed the “lean to one side” policy which entailed allying with the Soviet Union in order to confront the latter’s chief Cold War adversary, the United States, which was openly hostile to China and sought to weaken it through a trade embargo and diplomatic isolation (see Li, *China’s Soviet Dream*, 7).

Yang took pains to eulogize Black writers who displayed what they understood to be ‘revolutionary’ qualities and offered some biographical information about them, and the complete invisibility of Abrahams in the translated text’s paratexts, other than the fact of his authorship. As shown in the last chapter, a new idiom for discussing Black literature and its authors had begun to emerge in the late 1920s and early 1930s in the wake of the implicit left-wing ideological challenge to the Black slave topos, racial hierarchism, and other such structures that had hitherto suppressed engagement with Black literatures. I argue that the peritexts of the Chinese translation of *The Path of Thunder* diverge from this emergent idiom to the detriment of the proper contextualization of the book and its significance in the Chinese context. Most prominent among these peritexts is a Soviet critic’s introduction (addressed to Soviet readers) that virtually unilaterally mediated the book’s reception with the Chinese reading audience. The present section will focus primarily on the publishing context of the translation of *The Path of Thunder* and consider how such a work could gain access to the Chinese literary sphere via the Soviet Union, while the book’s peritextual materials will be the main subject of the next section.

Pingming Press was established during a heady period for publishing and translating Russian/Soviet literature in China.⁴ Not only, as Nicolai Volland notes, had Mao Zedong announced that the PRC would ally itself with the Soviet Union and the ‘socialist camp’ in an article as early as July of 1949, but, as Xiufang Li relates, had also personally attended the inaugural national conference for “publishing work” in September, calling on all attendees to do this work “well” and “conscientiously”, thereby revealing the incoming regime’s special emphasis on this industry as “an important tool, that the Party had to master, for propagating socialist education among the masses”.⁵ The mass translation of Soviet works, as well as smaller numbers of texts from Eastern European nations, was part of the drive to build “an international socialist identity for China” and it led to a somewhat “chaotic state” within the publishing industry as “publishers rushed to position themselves in this high-growth market”.⁶ As the oldest socialist country, the Soviet Union now became the primary institutional authority, providing “the models for a new socialist literature that were to be emulated across the socialist bloc”, thus explaining “the relatively large amount of unidirectional translation activity, from the

⁴ Russian literature had garnered the attention of many prominent May Fourth writer-translators since the “political victory of the Russian revolution” in 1917; by the 1930s, “Soviet literature came, in the eyes of many, to represent the intellectual vanguard of contemporary world literature” (see Gamsa, *The Reading of Russian Literature in China*, 3–4).

⁵ Volland, ‘Translating the Socialist State’, 51; Li, ‘Shehuizhuyi gaizaozhongde Pingming chubanshe’ [The socialist transformation of Pingming Press], 82. cf. 在建国初期，国家对出版业的理解“出版业是宣传社会主义教育群众的重要工具，党必须加以掌握”，1949年10月3—19日，新中国成立后召开了第一次全国出版工作会议。毛泽东主席于9月为大会题词：“认真做好出版工作”，并在会议期间接见了全体代表。

⁶ Volland, 60–62.

centre to the periphery of the socialist world”. In the early years of the PRC, these mass translation activities, however, rarely encompassed works from beyond the socialist world as yet, and there was little evidence of any serious interest in rejuvenating literary categories such as those of the writings of ‘oppressed peoples’ or ‘small and weak nations’. While Western literature had also been marginalized in the wake of the fervour to consume Soviet writings, the former retained its *raison d’être* as a remnant of the May Fourth translation tradition. Qi indicates that the translation of Euro-American literature continued after 1949 (albeit not in as large volumes as in previous decades), mainly through the efforts of individual translators until the complete halt in translation of such works in 1966 with the eruption of the Cultural Revolution.⁷ As shown in the previous chapter, however, Black literatures lacked such a clearly defined legacy.

Ba Jin took up the position of editor-in-chief of Pingming Press, as well as that of its chairperson of the board, and appears to have surrounded himself with cofounders with whom he had enjoyed “longstanding and deep” personal friendships.⁸ As Han notes, Ba Jin’s eminence as a publisher also ensured that Pingming Press attracted a host of excellent translators.⁹ In light of these

⁷ Qi, *Western Literature in China and the Translation of a Nation*, 125.

⁸ Li, 82. cf. 通过该报告可以看到平明的组成人员都是与巴金先生有着长久并深厚的个人关系的。

⁹ Han, *Literature Journals in the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression in China (1931-1938)*, 6.

factors, it is not surprising that Pingming Press's publication record over its six years of existence reflects his editorial vision, as expressed in both the official records of the publishing house and his personal communications. According to the publishing house's business registration in 1952, the primary task of Pingming Press was the translation of the "masterpieces of world literature" as well as the publication of books about culture and history.¹⁰ Elsewhere, in his private correspondence, Ba Jin emphasized the need to "persist" with the "principles" of this vision, "no matter what", and that this was what was desired by libraries and readers.¹¹ According to its records, Pingming Press was faithful to this vision: although, as may be expected, Soviet and older Russian texts predominated, works from many other countries were translated.¹²

For the purposes of the present discussion, the question of how literary works from *beyond* the socialist world would have entered and been translated in the China of the early 1950s is central. I argue that it is likely that Ba Jin, like the other editors mentioned by Volland, realized that translating works emanating from the Soviet Union in particular allowed publishers "to avoid political sensitivities associated with translations of literature from capitalist nations".¹³

¹⁰ Li, 84. cf. 在1952年平明的工商登记中所确定的出版方向是国外文学名著的翻译和文史书籍的出版。

¹¹ Li, 84. cf. ...中图和读者也希望我们专出文艺书籍(至多也不能出语文、文史的范围)。无论如何我们得坚持这个原则。

¹² Li, 84. cf. 在平明存在的六年中, 文学名著的翻译出版占主要部分, 并且是以苏联和旧俄的文学著作出版为主。

¹³ Volland, 'Translating the Socialist State', 62.

In an atmosphere in which, as Qi claims, “whatever was hot in the Soviet Union at the moment...would be translated into Chinese almost instantaneously”, he must have realized that his fledgling publishing house would have to focus on Soviet literature to be competitive and that the literature both of pre-Soviet Russia and other countries that had been published in the Soviet Union would also most likely be ideologically acceptable to the new Chinese regime.¹⁴ This should not imply that he, in any sense, sought to subvert the new order through publishing controversial material or that he was seen as politically subversive during this period. That he had been allowed to represent China as a member of a delegation travelling to Warsaw, Moscow, Kiev and Leningrad in 1950 highlights the fact that he was viewed as ideologically sound by the new government.¹⁵ Rather, Ba Jin appears to have sought to pursue a relatively independent editorial policy that would take advantage of the receptiveness of the new regime to Soviet norms and standards in order to facilitate access to noteworthy works from the socialist world and beyond. His personal openness to both Soviet and older Russian literature (shared by many other prominent figures of the leftist Chinese literary establishment since the 1920s) and its considerable influence on his writing may also have made such an approach appealing.¹⁶ Indeed, his policy appears to have been epitomized by his personal translation of a number of the Soviet writer Maxim Gorky’s works in

¹⁴ Qi, *Western Literature in China and the Translation of a Nation*, 123.

¹⁵ Volland, ‘Translating the Socialist State’, 55–56.

¹⁶ Ng, ‘Ba Jin and Russian Literature’, 68.

Pingming's first year of operations: he not only admired Gorky but later claimed that these translations were ideologically "reliable" in his memoirs.¹⁷

Although it is not possible to speculate on the direct participation of Ba Jin in the selection of *The Path of Thunder* for translation in China, the above adumbration of his editorial policy gestures towards an unusual receptiveness to Soviet institutional approbation that may have impacted selection decisions. A more adequate account, however, of precisely which forms of approbation may have prompted the selection of particular foreign texts seems to be crucial. Yan Li offers an instructive example of how a non-socialist bloc work may have gained access to the Chinese literary system via the Soviet Union through her brief discussion of the late nineteenth-century novel *The Gadfly* by Irish writer Ethel L. Voynich. The novel was first published in America and Britain but its "treatment of iconoclasm, revolution, and heroism made it enormously popular in the Soviet Union".¹⁸ As Lewis Bernhardt notes, about seventeen Russian editions of *The Gadfly* appeared between 1946 and 1955 alone and the book

¹⁷ Pino, 'Ba Jin as Translator', 46. Gorky is often regarded as the "founder of socialist realism" and was a "committed communist" (see Kelly, 'Gorky, Aragon and Socialist Realism', 109–11). The paradigm in the arts and literature until 1958 was socialist realism, based on the Soviet concept and first introduced to China in the 1930s (see King, *Milestones on a Golden Road*, 49). A close association with this concept, based as it was on Soviet artistic norms, could facilitate access to a Chinese literary sphere that was closely following those norms in the early 1950s. An example of a non-Soviet writer whose works may be regarded as permissible under this rubric was the French poet and novelist Louis Aragon who also joined the Communist Party and "focused on exploring the theory and practice of socialist realism" (see Kelly, 'Gorky, Aragon and Socialist Realism', 110). Several of his works were published by Pingming Press (see Li, 'Shehuizhuyi gaizaozhongde Pingming chubanshe' [The socialist transformation of Pingming Press], 87–89).

¹⁸ Li, *China's Soviet Dream*, 198.

was published repeatedly in non-Russian Soviet languages and in English in the Soviet Union between 1946 and 1966.¹⁹ It also spawned a number of dramatic, film and operatic adaptations in the Soviet Union and appears to have influenced certain Soviet literary works.²⁰ Furthermore, the book was “widely used in the Soviet school system”, seemingly able to straddle the purposes of being a “language aid” or recommended reading for school students and of serving as “revolutionary and anti-religious propaganda”.²¹

Since all of these aspects indicate considerable Soviet institutional backing for Voynich’s book, it is hardly surprising that it was selected for publication in the early years of the PRC. Published in China a year after Abrahams’s work in 1953 under the title *Niumeng* by China Youth Press (‘Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe’), it was, according to Li, “promoted as a model revolutionary work when Soviet culture was filling China” and “its combination of revolutionary passion with personal romance and disillusionment instantly captivated Chinese readers”.²² The book’s peritexts are a veritable case study in how Soviet mediation could be recruited in the ‘packaging’ of a foreign text for Chinese readers, thereby forestalling potential ideological obstacles. Translations of the

¹⁹ Bernhardt, “‘The Gadfly’ in Russia”, 7–8. Musing on the “astounding” success of the book, Bernhardt adds that “there are at least sixty Russian-language editions of the novel, and at least forty editions in other Soviet languages and English” with “total copies of the novel” approaching “four million”.

²⁰ Bernhardt, 11–13.

²¹ Bernhardt, 16.

²² Li, *China’s Soviet Dream*, 198.

Nikolay Ostrovsky's celebrated Soviet novel *How the Steel Was Tempered* and the children's book *Stories of Zoya and Shura* were wildly popular in China; the main characters of both works (Pavel Korchagin and Zoya) are said to have been inspired by *The Gadfly*.²³ A brief synopsis above the publication information on the back of the title page not only establishes the revolutionary pedigree of *Niumeng* but also notes that its source text is mentioned by the authors (Ostrovsky and Liubov Kosmodemianskaia) in both of these Soviet texts. This suggests a deployment not only of the status of these works as model ideological texts but also of the longstanding authority of select foreign writers in China in order to sanction the publication of the translation and promote its consumption by readers familiar with the Soviet works.²⁴ On the very next page, a quotation from Ostrovsky's novel is included as an epigraph, presumably serving the same purposes. A publisher's note is added on the subsequent page, in which it is stated that, although the source text is an American edition of the book, two Soviet Russian-language texts were consulted in the preparation of the translation, that the illustrations as well as the translator notes were taken largely from one of these latter editions, and that any abridgements in the Soviet editions relating to religious material or irrelevant "trifles" were considered important enough to be retained.²⁵ This initial 'framing' of the text is completed

²³ Li, 198.

²⁴ 'Niumeng: Neirong tiyao' [*The Gadfly*: Synopsis of content]. cf. 奥斯特洛夫斯基在《钢铁是怎样炼成的》里面, 柯斯莫捷锦斯卡亚在《卓娅和舒拉的故事》里面都会提到过这部小说。

²⁵ 'Chubanzhede hua' [Publisher's word]. cf. 本书是依据一种英文原本 (纽约 Gosset&Dunlap 的版本) 并参照两种俄译本 (苏联青年近卫军出版局一九五〇年的版本和苏联俄国家儿童出版局一九四九年的版本)

by the inclusion of a translation of a lengthy introduction from one of the Russian-language editions mentioned in place of the author's original introduction.

Although Voynich's novel was first published in Russia many decades before *The Path of Thunder*, the two novels seem to have had similar trajectories in the Soviet Union. The first Russian edition of the latter appeared in 1949 and the Foreign Languages Publishing House in Moscow released its own English edition in 1951. By 1971, no fewer than twenty-nine editions had been published in the socialist bloc, including five Russian publications and four English editions.²⁶ Why it was so popular in the Soviet Union is difficult to gauge, but, like *The Gadfly*, its appeal may have been related to the story's combination of interracial romance and the main characters' ultimately ill-fated defiance of injustice — although this is speculative. The book's usefulness as anti-imperialist/capitalist propaganda is more obvious, as it is a protest against racism that could readily be cast in communist terms. For example, the introduction portrays racial discrimination as a tool to divide the working class

翻译和校订的。...本书略去了这段序言，另外采用了儿童出版局的俄译本上叶戈洛娃所写的序文。...本书的插图都采自近卫军出版局的俄译本，注文也大多是就这个俄译本上的注文加以补充的。两种俄译本都把原文里一些宗教气氛过浓和一些跟主要情节无关的繁琐的描写删节了...我们以为这种删并不违背原著的精神，而且为了照顾读者的接受能力，是必要的。根据青年近卫军出版局的俄译本，拿译文做了一些删节。

²⁶ Lahaie, 'Peter Abrahams Publications and Translations in Communist Space'. <https://faculty.works/Hebrew%20University/Apartheid%20-%20The%20Global%20Itinerary.html>, last accessed 10 December 2021.

in South Africa. The role of the Communist Party in uniting “natives” and white workers “under the guidance of the correct principles of Marxism–Leninism” is then foregrounded.²⁷ Moreover, in addition to this “poignant condemnation of a racist society”, Abrahams’s status as “only the second black South African to have published novels in English” and his association with pan-Africanist politics may have facilitated the dissemination of his novel, despite his break with the Communist Party in Britain.²⁸ Like *The Gadfly* too, Abrahams’s book also spawned both a screen and ballet adaptation in the Soviet Union.²⁹

However, by 1952, this cultural impact had not been registered as yet, and the Soviet English edition that would be the source for the first Chinese version was most likely intended to be a reader for Soviet students studying English. The Russian commentary towards the end of the first English edition opens with the statement that the language of the book is not difficult and that it may be included in the syllabus for foreign-language students at the end of the first year or in the second year of university.³⁰ It then discusses the language and style of the book in some detail before laying out detailed translation notes and glosses

²⁷ Kornilova, ‘Xuyan’ [Introduction], 7. cf. 共产党员在马列主义的正确指导下渴望团结土人和白种工人...

²⁸ Lahaie, Barnai, and Bethlehem, ‘Choreographing Ideology: On the Ballet Adaptation of Peter Abrahams’ *The Path of Thunder in the Soviet Union*, 287–88.

²⁹ Ramzes, ‘African Literature in Russia’, 25.

³⁰ cf. Kornilova, ‘КОММЕНТАРИЙ’ [Commentary], 269. Язык книги Абрахамса нетруден, словарь, которым пользуется автор, невелик по объему, в тексте встречаются грамматические конструкции, которые в основном входят в программу 1-го курса обучения факультетов и вузов иностранных языков. Поэтому эта книга будет доступна студентам на 2-м курсе или даже в конце 1-го курса. Special thanks to Ariiia Savskaia for her assistance with the translation of the text of this commentary.

for the reader. The proliferation of English editions suggests that the book remained a popular pedagogical aid thereafter.³¹

While it is difficult to ascertain what was known in China of either the original source text of *The Path of Thunder* or its Russian-language version, the publication of an English edition for educational and general use in the Soviet Union was a powerful affirmation of the book's ideological 'reliability'. In the competitive and fraught publishing industry of the period, the translation of such a book could be released rather quickly on the basis of its reception in the Soviet Union, especially since it, like *The Gadfly*, was 'framed' with a substantial introduction by a Soviet critic to situate it ideologically. That the Chinese translation of the Soviet edition (published under the title *Nuhou*) was released the very next year strongly suggests that it was made available to Pingming Press via the branch of the International Bookshop ('Guoji shudian') in Shanghai, part of a national network, headquartered in Beijing, that undertook the distribution of foreign (especially Soviet) books in the PRC up to 1955.³² The label on the inside back cover of my personal copy of the 1951

³¹ For example, P.D. Hey analysed a school textbook in 1960 that featured an introduction to, and an extract from, *The Path of Thunder* (see Hey, 'A Textbook for English for Soviet Schools', 202–3).

³² Wu, 'Zhongguo guoji tushu maoyi zonggongsi sishinian (1949-1988)' [Forty years of the China International Book Trading Corporation (1949-1988)], 2–4. cf. 1955 年以前, 国际书店的主要任务是把从苏联进口的中、俄、英、法、德、西、日多中文版的书刊、宣传画、伟人像、唱片等大量向国内发行...1955 年 7 月, 国际书店将苏新版外文图书的国内发行业务移交给新华书店。1955 年底, 又将苏新版外文报刊的国内发行业务全部交给北京邮局办理。The above quotation explicitly states that the Soviet Union was the source of books and periodicals, posters, portraits, and records in multiple languages that were distributed domestically by the International Bookshop network, the sole channel for domestic distribution. After 1955,

Soviet English edition confirms that the book was available at this Shanghai branch; the name and address of the International Bookshop appear in Russian and Chinese, further verifying its status as the official distribution agency for Soviet books.³³ It is unlikely that the source text for the translation would have entered China by other means since it had only been published very recently and the drive to make China's publishing sector "a direct copy of the Soviet model", with its centralized control of the distribution of books, was already underway.³⁴

At this juncture, it is crucial to add a caveat regarding the peritextual parallels between *Niumeng* and *Nuhou*. Leaving aside the substantial introductions that they have in common, *Nuhou* is striking in its lack of peritextual commentary when compared with Voynich's novel, which may be partially explained by their having been published by two different publishing houses. There are no translator or publisher summaries, epigraphs or forewords in *Nuhou*; it would appear that the responsibility for guiding the reader's reception of the text is entirely abdicated to the Soviet critic's long introduction. Indeed, all

these distribution functions were taken over by Xinhua Bookshop and the Beijing Post Office. This highlights the centrality of this channel as a source not only of Soviet cultural products but of those from the wider world; the Soviet Union thus became not just an intermediary but a veritable 'filter' of ideological content for China.

³³ The Chinese title *Nuhou* may be translated as 'roar' or 'roar of anger', clearly not a direct translation and a somewhat idiosyncratic choice. This is one of a range of peritextual interventions that somewhat obscure the book's origins. My personal copy of *The Path of Thunder* must have arrived in China after the Pingming translation was published as its Chinese name on the label is recorded as "*Nuhou*".

³⁴ Volland, 'The Control of the Media in the People's Republic of China', 279.

commentary by the Chinese agents involved in the translation and publication of this work is entirely absent and most other peritextual interventions are largely generic, as will be shown in the next section. A possible reason for this disparity could be that the translator of *Niumeng*, as noted earlier, was able to consult a number of Russian editions of the book in addition to the English source text, while there is no indication that anything other than the first Soviet English edition was available to *Nuhou*'s translator, Wang Yongnian.³⁵

Unfortunately, due to the absence of other paratextual materials, it is not clear what role Wang played apart from translating the text. It should also be noted that another of his translations for Pingming Press, this time of *În pragul primăverii* ("On the Threshold of Spring") by Romanian Aurel Mihale, also relies almost entirely on a translated introduction. His paratextual 'reticence' for his pre-1954 Pingming translations is all the more striking since he did add commentaries to a number of his translations for other publishers during the period.³⁶ As a consequence of this, while various biographical details are revealed about Voynich in the introduction to *Niumeng*, it is a moot point as to

³⁵ *The Path of Thunder* was translated by Wang Yongnian who adopted the penname 'Wang Zhongnian'. As a graduate of St. John's University in Shanghai, Wang was a member of a new generation of professional translators in China who had received multilingual training (see Volland, 'The Birth of a Profession: Translators and Translation in Modern China', 126–27). Wang was proficient in English, Russian, Spanish and Italian. Although he would go on to become a notable translator of Latin American authors, he was ideally suited for the early assignment of translating the Soviet edition of Abrahams's text as he could handle both the main text of the novel in English as well as its Russian introduction and notes (see 'Zhuming fanyijia Wang Yongnian xiansheng shishi' [Famous translator Wang Yongnian passes away], <http://www.changjiangtimes.com/2012/07/401744.html>).

³⁶ See Wang's 1958 translation of Bruno Traven's book *Caomang jiangjun* ('General from the jungle') in 1958 and his 1953 rendering of *The Dawn of a Great Project* by V. Galaktionov and A. Agranovsky, translated as *Yige weidade jianshede kaiduan*.

whether Chinese readers knew that Abrahams was South African, let alone a Black writer, as nothing is said about him in the peritexts of *Nuhou*. Given that the extent of the collective exposure to stories about South Africa had historically been limited to works by H. Rider Haggard and Olive Schreiner, it is not inconceivable that Abrahams's identity would have remained entirely opaque to Chinese readers. This discussion will be resumed in the next section in which the book's peritextual apparatus is compared to those of other translated socialist texts in the series released by Pingming Press.

Finally, the Soviet editions of the *The Path of Thunder* in English were to have a seemingly disproportionate influence on the immediate future of the book in China. While the Pingming Press edition was intended for the general reader, it would appear that the pedagogical value of the book, foregrounded in the first two Soviet editions, strongly influenced the subsequent Chinese English-language edition, published by the Commercial Press ('Shangwu yinshuguan') in 1959 under the title *Pili qiancheng*.³⁷ The preface seems to echo the language of the Soviet edition concerning the suitability of the book for English-language university students (third- or fourth-year in the Chinese case) or learners of an equivalent level due to its "smooth and easy" style and the "high degree of

³⁷ The Chinese title *Pili qiancheng* may be translated as 'future of thunder' but this does not supersede the original title which appears together with the Chinese title on the cover of the book.

vocabulary repetition”.³⁸ Indeed, *Pili qiancheng* was most likely drawing on the second Soviet English edition since the latter’s cover image of a woman with her head resting on a man’s shoulder as they embrace was reproduced in miniature on the former’s cover. Although *Pili qiancheng* was published much later in the decade during the upsurge in the translation of African texts, its distinctiveness from those works reinforces the argument pursued in this section concerning the initial translation of Abrahams’s book as having been unrelated to any notions of solidarity with a fellow ‘Afro-Asian Third World’ nation or to the heroic revolutionary qualities of its author, criteria which would become extremely significant for the mediation of African writers and their works within just a few years after the publication of *Nuhou*. Rather, the unusual receptiveness to Soviet norms and texts in the China of the early 1950s (including not only those authored by Soviets but also those sanctioned through publication in the USSR), as well as the competitive nature of the translation

³⁸ ‘Neirong jianjie’ 内容简介 [Synopsis of content]. cf. 本书文字流畅，用字重复率大。...本书适合大学英语系三、四年级学生和相当程度的学习者阅读。That the book was used in university courses in English was verified in at least one case by an online post eulogizing a famous department head in Nankai University’s School of Foreign Languages, which the writer recalls being taught the book as part of an extensive reading course by a particular teacher (‘金堤老师讲泛读课，指导我们读《霹雳前程》...’) (see Zhu, ‘Zhu Entao: Huainian ensi Ji Ye xiansheng [Zhu Entao: Remembering revered teacher Mr Ji Ye] <http://www.xinyifanyi.com/news.asp?id=3213>, last accessed 30 November 2021). It is also possible that Li Yao, the translator of the 1980 edition of *The Path of Thunder* (published under the title *Yi lu leiting*), encountered the book at university in Inner Mongolia in the 1960s, especially since he claimed that he read it in secret during the Cultural Revolution in a 2008 profile (see Liu, ‘How Li Was Found in Translation’, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cndy/2008-11/18/content_7213587.htm, last accessed 30 November 2021). There is also abundant evidence of borrowing from the Chinese notes and glosses of *Pili qiancheng* in the 1980 version.

market, were likely to have rendered the debut of *The Path of Thunder* in China primarily a matter of political and commercial expedience.

3.2 ‘Dressed in borrowed robes’: How Pingming Press’s peritextual protocols undermined the Chinese debut of *The Path of Thunder*

China’s transition to CCP rule inaugurated new kinds of paratextual protocols for the Chinese context, as publishing houses like Pingming Press tended both to follow the models that they observed in Soviet publications and those of other socialist countries as well as to evolve their own unique practices. These practices were shaped and constrained by ideological considerations, but the possibility of real scarcities of background material and information in the early PRC should also not be ignored as a potential factor. In this section, I analyse the peritextual framing of *Nuhou* by juxtaposing it with the framings of contemporaneous publications from other countries in the same series. I argue that the use of a generic cover image, the omission of any reference to country of origin in the short peritexts prior to the introduction, and the overall absence of any biographical information about Peter Abrahams negate the significance of the debut of a novel about Africa by a Black African writer in a literary sphere in which the continent and its peoples had always been marginalized and stereotyped.

Pingming Press faced a number of problems in the initial stages of its operations, and these may have affected its paratextual practices. A brief summary of them is offered at this juncture to highlight that material conditions may have also played a role in the presentation of Abrahams's text, so as not to imply, despite the historically racialized nature of the Chinese literary milieu, that perceived omissions or deficiencies in the peritextual presentation are attributable to a racial bias necessarily. Rather, having revealed pertinent aspects of this milieu in previous chapters, the exposition in the paragraphs below will stress the potential consequences of such a presentation in this specific context. Li quotes the following passage from Pingming Press's records:

Apart from classical works, collecting materials is quite difficult. We want to edit and publish works from people's democracies [socialist countries], but materials are extremely scarce and difficult to gather. Since translators who know Russian well are very scarce, new Soviet works are often translated from English. As a result, new material is often limited to works from Soviet [English-language] literary monthlies or separate French and English volumes. However, these kinds of materials are also rare, and longer works in these monthlies are often abridged.³⁹

³⁹ Li, 'Shehuizhuyi gaizaozhongde Pingming chubanshe' [The socialist transformation of Pingming Press], 84. cf. 材料收集颇感困难，除古典作品而外，我们颇想编辑出版人民民主国家的作品选集，但材料极少，难以收集。即如苏联新作，因为翻译者谙俄文的极少，都从英文本译出，以致所取新的材料往往限于苏联文学月刊或英法文单行本，但这种材料亦少，月刊上刊载的长篇有时略有删节。

While Li subsequently points out that these were among problems faced by many private publishers during the period, and that Pingming, due to its staffing and leadership, was considerably better off than many of its peers, these challenges almost certainly impacted decisions regarding paratexts — and may have played a role in the absence of peritextual commentaries in *Nuhou*. This could lead to the omission of all peritextual commentaries, whether authored or translated. *Zuigaode xunzhang* (“The Highest Medal”), first published in January 1950 with a second edition in 1953, for example, has neither an introduction nor any short peritexts to contextualize it for the reader. This diverges with the standard practice for Soviet works that will be outlined below, and indicates that Pingming’s handling of different texts may have been contingent on what was available to them. The quotation also suggests that, despite the fact that both Ba Jin and Wang Yongnian could translate from Russian, the overall shortage of Russian translators at a time in which there was considerable market demand for Soviet texts must have made *The Path of Thunder* an appealing choice for translation. It was probably treated as a Soviet publication for reasons already mentioned in the last section. Moreover, it would appear that supplementing the information provided in the introduction was either too difficult, due to the aforementioned limitations, or seen as unnecessary, given the length of the introduction and the prestige of its having been written by a Soviet critic. It is also evident from the above quotation that Pingming Press’s translation priorities, as indicated elsewhere, were mainly

classics as well as works from the Soviet Union and other socialist countries; Afro-Asian works were never its focus.

The cover image, as the first site where the reader encounters the text, is a convenient place to begin a discussion of the book's peritexts. *Nuhou* was published as part of a series called 'Jindai wenxue yicong' ('Modern literature translation collection'); it also included reference books on literature and was thus not confined to fiction. The book jackets of the works in this series are remarkably nondescript, as were many released by other publishers during the early years of the PRC. While a variety of images were used for the book covers of the series, the cover image of *Nuhou*, shared by many other translations in the series before about 1954, features a jubilant European/Soviet-looking family on what appears to be a hillside overlooking a city in the distance (see figure 2 below). The artwork appears to be a line drawing with a 'negative' colour scheme, meaning that the lines are in white on a darker background. The image is the same in all cases but the colour of the background could be any one of a range of colours (in the case of *Nuhou*, it is light blue). The male figure is facing away from the viewer as he stretches his arms towards the sky in a celebratory gesture and the woman and child on either side of him are both oriented towards him with joyful facial expressions. This generic cover, unrelated to the content of any specific text, appears to be positioning Chinese readers as members of an

imagined reading public of the socialist world that knows no borders but is united in its celebration of living in the aftermath of the socialist victory. The image appears to constitute an implicit invitation to the reader to engage with the text between the covers from the point of view of people anticipating a bright socialist future. This reading of the cover is substantiated by a particular trope in the pro-Soviet propaganda of the early 1950s that offered the Soviet ‘present’ as a teleological destination for China (that is to say, the reality of becoming “an equally powerful and advanced socialist nation” would be “the Chinese tomorrow” now that China was on the socialist path).⁴⁰ The series included texts from, among other places, the Soviet Union, Denmark, England, France, Bulgaria, Romania, India, and the United States, as well as older Russian texts.⁴¹ However, of the books in the series with the same cover as *Nuhou* that I have been able to locate, most are translations of Soviet works and almost all are by authors from socialist bloc countries, the exceptions being Abrahams and the writers and editors (Imai Tadashi, Iwasa Hisaya, and Hirata Kanezou) of the screenplay of a famous Japanese socialist film *Dokkoi ikiteru* (*And Yet We Live*).⁴² Considering that the shared cover image appears to have submerged Abrahams’s book in a transnational assemblage of texts from the Soviet Union/socialist bloc in particular, I contend that the South African

⁴⁰ Li, *China’s Soviet Dream*, 13.

⁴¹ For a relatively comprehensive list of all the titles featured in this series, see Li, ‘Shehuizhuyi gaizaozhongde Pingming chubanshe’ [The socialist transformation of Pingming Press], 87–89.

⁴² Sadoul, *Dictionary of Film Makers*, 122. The Chinese title of both this publication and the film is *Bu, women yao huo xiaqu!*.

provenance of *Nuhou* would have been entirely invisible to the browsing reader. Furthermore, the association of this peritextual packaging with ‘Soviet/socialist’ works may also have distorted the ideological positioning of the Abrahams’s original text since he appears to have adopted more of a liberal perspective in this work than had been the case in his earlier novels that had been more heavily influenced by Marxism.⁴³ As will be shown in the next chapter, this is also a markedly different handling of an African text compared with later in the decade.

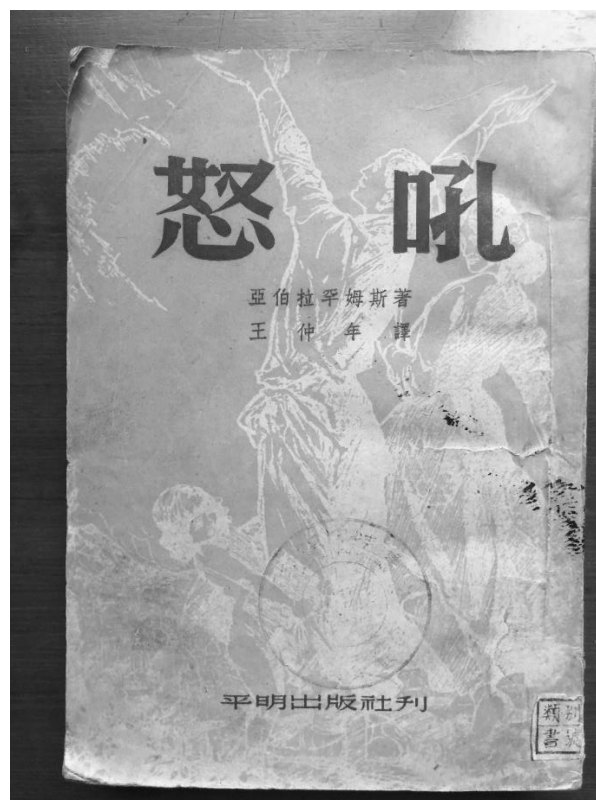


Figure 2: The cover image of *Nuhou* (photograph by author).

⁴³ Jean-Philippe Wade describes the text as ‘pro-capitalist’, “hostile” to Marxism, and representative of a return to “a full-blooded liberalism” on Abrahams’s part (see Wade, ‘Peter Abrahams’s *The Path of Thunder*’, 70). Michael Wade suggests that the book is the last of the novels to be produced during a period in which he was mainly influenced by communism and Pan-Africanism but notes that Abrahams had been ambivalent about communism from his earliest involvement with it (see Wade, ‘The Novels of Peter Abrahams’, 83).

The submergence enacted by the cover image is perpetuated by the short peritexts on the first few pages of *Nuhou*, but this should not imply that the book was treated much differently from any other text in this group. The title pages of most of the works with this shared cover, and indeed, many of the translated works of the early 1950s in general, do not refer to the author's country of origin, again seemingly reinforcing the idea of a borderless global space in which texts by authors from socialist countries and those by writers allied to socialist causes could circulate without deference to national or ethnic boundaries. In the 'Modern literature translation collection' until 1953, the exceptions were usually Soviet texts, in which the word 'Sulian' ('Soviet Union') could be mentioned before the author's name on the title page (and, in a number of cases, even on the cover), a powerful promotional device given the pro-Soviet atmosphere of the period and one that situated the Soviet Union at the centre of this imagined global space. Almost all of the title pages in this group appear on page three after the flyleaf. In the top half of the title page, the name of the series appears first, followed by the Chinese title in larger font; the author's name and the translator's name appear next below one another, while the name of the publisher appears at the bottom of the page. In the case of the Soviet translations, a short summary (usually on the second page of the flyleaf) of the sort mentioned in relation to the Voynich translation in the last section is

generally offered.⁴⁴ Here, the paratext writer sums up the plot of the story or stories and often draws the reader's attention to what is edifying about the text from an implicitly ideological perspective.⁴⁵ In the case of books by authors from other socialist countries, this summary is notably absent before 1953 — as it is in *Nuhou*. Of the five books from socialist countries besides the Soviet Union that I was able to locate that share this cover, three were published in 1952 and none of these included this summary.⁴⁶ Juxtaposing these translations with *Nuhou* highlights that the peritextual presentation in the opening pages of the latter was largely generic, and that, although books by Soviet authors could be treated differently, the framing of *Nuhou* was not atypical.⁴⁷ On the back of

⁴⁴ There are a few exceptions to this protocol. In this respect, both year of publication and information available seem to have played a role. As mentioned previously, *Zuigaode xunzhang* was first published in 1950 and has no peritextual commentaries; another example of this would be *Juedingde buzhou* (“The Decisive Step”) by Soviet Turkmen writer Berdi Kerabayev, first published in 1951, which also lacks the summary.

⁴⁵ In the Soviet short story collection published under the name *Yunque* (“The Skylark”) by Pingming Press in 1953 and featuring the same cover image as *Nuhou*, such a summary appears on page two of the flyleaf that foregrounds the admirable socialist qualities of the characters of each story. For example, the main character of the title story, a tractor station telegraph operator, is presented as worthy of emulation in her concern for the community's crops during a drought and her great joy at the arrival of the rains (““云雀” 写一个拖拉机站的女报务员在当地干旱的时候，如何为集体农庄的庄稼担心，和在甘雨降临时的满怀喜悦”) (see ‘Neirong jieshao’ [Synopsis of content]).

⁴⁶ This sub-group includes *Zai chuntiande menkanshang* (“On the Threshold of Spring”) by the Romanian writer Aurel Mihale, *Yuminde qiyi* (“Revolt of the Fishermen”) by German author Anna Seghers (considered East German), and *Nipeng hu* (“The Mud-hut Dwellers”) also by Romanian author Mihail Sadoveanu. *Feng wang zhebian chui* (“The Way the Wind Blows”) by István Asztalos, an ethnic Hungarian writer from Romania, and *Nongmin qiyi* (“Revolt of the Peasants”) by Romanian Petru Dumitriu both have these summaries and were published in 1953. The preponderance of Romanian writers, and the fact that most of the stories came from the English-language *Rumanian Review*, is suggestive of the lack of resources spoken of earlier and an over-reliance on English as an interlocutor language. In general, the frequency with which the sources mentioned are English-language and limited to a small range suggests that materials were scarce and that there was a high probability that any Soviet/socialist bloc work in this most accessible of interlocutor languages would be selected for translation. Of the eleven works in this group authored by Soviet writers, six were translated from the English-language *Soviet Literature Monthly* which was published in several languages. *The Path of Thunder*, although not by a writer from these places, was also highly accessible for this reason.

⁴⁷ The only other book with the same cover by writers who were not from a country within the socialist bloc that I could locate is the aforementioned Japanese screenplay *Bu, women yao huo xiaqu!*, first published in 1952. This text lacks even the publication information provided in *Nuhou* but the cultural familiarity of literate Chinese with Japanese names rendered in Chinese characters would have made it instantly recognizable as having had Japanese authors.

the title page, more publication information is added, with the dates of publication, number of printings and copies per printing all stated at the top, followed by details about the source text (if available), which could be in Chinese, English or (occasionally) Russian. In the case of *Nuhou*, Abrahams's name, the name of the source text, and the name of the Soviet publishing house all appear in English in this space. In the absence of any other short peritextual devices such as blurbs, it seems highly probable that Chinese readers would not have known that they were encountering the first work of fiction in China in which an African writer, speaking as a conscious political subject, excoriated the conditions of the oppression of his people. These people, in turn, could no longer merely be dismissed as the passive and slavish objects of oppression that white writers could stereotype, uplift or ignore as they saw fit.⁴⁸ The radical nature of what Abrahams and his text represented in the Chinese context was thus overlooked and the first meaningful challenge to lingering perceptions about Africa and Blackness would have to wait until later in the decade when the paratextual elevation of the continent and its writers in the eyes of Chinese readers was intentionally undertaken — the subject of the remaining chapters.

⁴⁸ As Kolawole Ogungbesan points out, the publication of Abrahams's novels inspired a number of other prominent African writers even though he differed politically and aesthetically with those who came after him (see Ogungbesan, 'A Long Way from Vrededorp', 187–88).

Biographical information, if it did appear, was often included in the introductions or prefaces to the works in this group. Apart from praising Abrahams's descriptions and noting the fact of his authorship, however, the long introduction to *Nuhou* contains nothing further about him.⁴⁹ The deployment of biographical details about an author, usually in introductions or forewords, appears to have been selective and deliberate. It is important to note that, since these longer peritexts were usually translations themselves, the protocols enacted within the various texts were not initiated by the various mediators at Pingming Press, but rather reproduced and thereby tacitly endorsed by them. In the group under discussion, both Soviet and other socialist bloc writers could be profiled; this seems, once again, to have been contingent on what information was available, but it is clear that other criteria also played a role. Several of the works in this group that contain biographical information were by authors who had won prestigious prizes in the socialist world or held high official positions (or both).⁵⁰ Such was the status of those at the apex of

⁴⁹ Other writers could be treated in a similar manner. For example, Petru Dimitriu's book is a story set in pre-communist Romania that also reveals the villainy of the landlord 'class enemies' (as mentioned in its short peritextual summary), but offers no biographical information beyond praise for the author as an outstanding writer.

⁵⁰ As mentioned in the preface to the Chinese translation of his work, Mihail Sadoveanu was a member of the International Stalin Prize committee and a winner of the World Peace Council's Gold Medal award in 1950. He also held the high political position of "President of the Great National Assembly" after the Second World War and wrote the influential socialist realist work *Mitrea Cocor* in 1949, later also translated into Chinese (see Stancu, 'Engineering the Human Soul: Science Fiction in Communist Romania 1955-1989', 65). As "a veteran Communist Party member and president of the East German Writers' Union", Anna Seghers and her works were promoted "after she had won the Stalin Prize in 1951" (see Volland, 'Translating the Socialist State', 66). Sadoveanu's text opens with a brief profile of the writer and the plot, followed by a twenty-one-page article on his life and many works, while Segher's novel begins with a translator foreword that includes biographical information, followed by a Soviet-authored essay on the role of realism in her oeuvre as a whole. Other examples include Antonina Koptayeva whose novel *A'erchanuofu yisheng* ("Dr Arzhanov") was awarded the Stalin Prize in 1949 and Berdi Kerbabayev who was also a Stalin Prize committee member and winner of the Stalin Prize for literature.

this group that their biographies could be deployed at length for ideological purposes in these longer peritexts.⁵¹ While African literature was, as yet, invisible in this period, the biographies of African writers would be put to similar uses from the late 1950s onwards.

A second criterion may have been the extent to which the work in question not only foregrounded key issues facing the young PRC (and other socialist countries) but handled them in an ideologically appealing manner that made the work suitable for propaganda. For example, István Asztalos's novel "The Way the Wind Blows" appears to have been elevated to this category on the basis of its treatment, in the context of Romania, of the issue of ethnic unity and the problem of ethnic chauvinism.⁵² The book also opens with the conventional peritextual summary, but its tone is particularly didactic, urging readers to recognize that the only "true enemies" are "class enemies" who exploit divisions between different ethnic groups and insisting that "all poor people, no

⁵¹ A good example of this is Sadoveanu who was one of the "opportunistic intellectuals from the interwar period that, although their previous writings had nothing to do with communist ideology, were willing to adapt and republish some of their old writings so as to serve the new regime" (see Stancu, 85–86). In turn, the regime may have been further legitimized by association with a major literary figure. In the long introduction to his life and works, the key element of his position and his "democratic" and "patriotic" works prior to the formation of the new Romanian government in 1944 is presented as being his "closeness to the lives of the people" and his ability to learn from them ('决定这作家立场, 决定他作品具有民主主义和爱国主义性格的最重要因素, 就是萨都维亚努热爱地接近人民的生活, 他会学习并继续从生活里学习') (see Aigenaite and Fei'erjiasang, 'Lun Saduweiyanu jiqi zuopin' [On Sadoveanu and his works], 3).

⁵² Law points out that "equality and unity were two key principles for Mao's policies on ethnic minorities in China which were set out in the Common Programme, the interim constitution adopted on 29 September 1949" (see Law, *Red Racisms*, 107). While equality between the dominant Han majority and the various minorities was promoted "in order to combat Han chauvinism", notions of the Han as the "politically more advanced and better endowed" group "pervaded the early decades of the communist regime" (see Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, chap. 'Race as Nationality (1949-2012)').

matter which group they belong to, are one family”.⁵³ The Romanian English-language foreword, from which the main points of this summary appear to have been distilled, also presents Asztalos’s life story, emphasizing his background in the poor working class and his metamorphosis from a writer with a “parochial” perspective who is cynical about the possibilities of revolution in his home district before the “liberation” of Romania from “slavery” under fascism into a “mature” writer who “speaks with confidence” about the revolutionary struggle and whose art is dedicated to serving the workers.⁵⁴ I contend that this appropriation of a writer’s biography for ideological purposes, common in the paratexts of works published in socialist countries, was readily adopted or reproduced by Chinese paratextual mediators who were drawing on a longstanding native tradition, as Gamsa suggests, of presenting foreign writers as heroic and their lives as worthy of emulation to a reading audience thought to be highly impressionable.⁵⁵

Set alongside these writers and their texts, it is clear that Abrahams’s book was an odd selection for inclusion in this group; the author was not, after all, living

⁵³ ‘Neirong jieshao’ [Synopsis of content]. cf. 人们明白了，只有阶级敌人才是真正的敌人，天下穷人（不管是哪个民族的）是一家…

⁵⁴ ‘Yingyi benxu’ [Foreword by English translator], 3. cf. 在他那做铁路工人的父亲死后不久，他就不得不努力做工来维持生活。…阿慈塔洛斯的社会思想和艺术思想是狭隘的…他认为乡村是一个没有任何革命力量的闭塞的世界。在洛曼尼亚从法西斯奴役下地得到解放以后，阿慈塔洛斯所写的作品，证明了他正在开始转变…他现在使得他的艺术完全为劳动人服务了，并且信心坚定的述说着他们的革命斗争…

⁵⁵ Gamsa, *The Reading of Russian Literature in China*, 21. Gamsa also reiterates C.T. Hsia’s view that Chinese readers were traditionally imagined to be “totally impressionable” from the Qing period onwards (see Gamsa, 101; Hsia, *C.T. Hsia on Chinese Literature*, 226).

in a socialist state as the majority of the other writers were. This made the fulfilment of these criteria impossible, as not only did he come from a settler colonial society instead, but his years of exile meant that he was not embedded in it, and thus not struggling against oppression *with his people* as the ideal socialist writers would have been. In the next section, I will suggest that this lack of embeddedness in his native country may have hindered the full acknowledgement of his status as an “Afro-Asian” writer as well. Moreover, as noted previously in relation to his works, by the year of the publication of *Nuhou*, Abrahams had cast off Marxism decisively and was an avowed liberal.⁵⁶ In addition, the introduction to *Nuhou* also foregrounds the deficiencies of the book in terms of a socialist literary agenda, stating directly that the book does not deal with “crucial events in society” and highlighting that, although the character Mako has a “foreboding that the time for open and direct struggle with the ruling classes is approaching”, this struggle was “unfortunately not revealed” in the story.⁵⁷ However, in light of the above, the fact that the book and its author’s biography could not be deployed in service of the same agenda as the others in this group does not mean that it did not possess ideological value from a Soviet and Chinese point of view.⁵⁸ After all, Lahaie, Barnai and

⁵⁶ Field, ‘Abrahams, Peter’, 7.

⁵⁷ Kornilova, ‘Xuyan’ [Introduction], 3–5. cf. 书中并没有写出重大的社会事件...他[Mako]预感到向统治阶级作正面公开斗争的时候即将来临。然而应该指出的是：在故事中这个斗争可惜并没有表明出来。

⁵⁸ The fact that *The Path of Thunder* was given to American prisoners during the Korean War as part of an indoctrination effort strongly suggests that the Chinese communists believed that the book could be wielded as a propaganda tool (see Biderman, Herman, and Howard, ‘Reading Materials in Chinese Communist Indoctrination Attempts against American Prisoners of War’, 190).

Bethlehem describe the introduction as elaborating “on the history of South Africa, using an explicitly Marxist analysis to tie racial oppression to economic exploitation”.⁵⁹ Moreover, towards the end of the introduction, Kornilova stated that “the influence of the October Revolution has promoted the realization of progressive and democratic forces in the Union of South Africa” and concluded with the emphatic contention that “the great Soviet Union is an inspiring role model” and “a beacon to oppressed people in all countries” that “always eradicates racial and ethnic oppression”.

Notwithstanding this critique of race and racism, what is at stake in the present discussion is the potential impact of the lacunae in the peritextual apparatus on the reception of the story and its author in the historically racialized Chinese context. Starting with the pervasive universalism of the cover image, the peritextual apparatus of *Nuhou* first distorts and then, through the absence of essential contextual information, obscures the provenance of the text. While it is true that a number of other Soviet/socialist bloc works in this group also lack biographical information about the authors, the setting of such stories allows the reader to infer much about the author’s background; the author’s ethnic origins

⁵⁹ Lahaie, Barnai, and Bethlehem, ‘Choreographing Ideology: On the Ballet Adaptation of Peter Abrahams’ *The Path of Thunder* in the Soviet Union’, 288.; Kornilova, ‘Xuyan’ [Introduction], 1–7. cf. 十月革命的影响促进了南非联邦中进步和民主力量的成真...伟大的苏维埃联邦是一个鼓舞激发的榜样, 是一切国家中被压迫的人民的灯塔...永远消灭了种族和民族的压迫...

were also mentioned in several cases.⁶⁰ By contrast, such inferences are often bedevilled by the issue of race in multiracial settler colonial societies like South Africa; in such cases, the historical marginalization of colonised peoples makes the recognition of authorship, perhaps especially when such books are overtly marshalled in service of an anti-imperialist agenda, an ethical imperative. The event of the recognition of the Black African origins of the book could have been a significant retort to the historical constructions of Blackness and Africa in the Chinese context. Instead, the absence of any form of paratextual contextualization as to the identity of Abrahams and the writing of *The Path of Thunder* negates the recognition of these origins. Indeed, it may be argued that Abrahams only ‘became’ an African writer to the Chinese reading public in 1957 when an extract from his autobiography *Tell Freedom* (‘Guanyu ziyoude gushi’) was published in the journal *Yiwen* (‘Translations’), framed by a peritextual biography. This and later such paratextual interventions in Abrahams’s oeuvre in China will be considered at length in the next section.

3.3 Peter Abrahams, Langston Hughes and the elevation of the ‘progressive’ Black writer (1952–1959)

Beyond the socialist world, “progressive” writers were broadly perceived to be “individuals sharing similar leftist concerns” and their works were therefore

⁶⁰ Asztalos and Kerabayev are examples.

often selected for translation in the early PRC.⁶¹ Although “western literature had had been ousted from its paramount position” in the Chinese literary sphere, the longstanding interest in it persisted and careful paratextual justification could sometimes even sanction the translation of a writer who, like Baudelaire, was “hardly a poster child of ‘progressive’ politics and realist literature”.⁶² While this ideologically volatile grouping was dominated by white Euro-American writers, it also came to include certain Black writers. I propose that this was due to the conjunction of specific political objectives on the part of the CCP with the increased and unprecedented visibility of certain African American public figures in the Chinese political milieu. Yet, the paratexts to translations of works by ‘progressive’ Black (initially African American and later African) writers disclose a tendency to minimize the “creative dimension” of these texts and instead insist on what Richard Watts has called in a different context a “transparent testimonial” function.⁶³ The works were usually framed by a “political denunciation” of racial discrimination as part of “an anti-Western ideological campaign” against the United States and were thus intended to bear witness to the realities of Black life in American society.⁶⁴ Despite the growing prevalence of the translation of “anticolonial literature” that included “Asian, African and Latin American writers concerned with struggles of national

⁶¹ Iovene, *Tales of Futures Past*, 66; Volland, *Socialist Cosmopolitanism*, 181.

⁶² Volland, *Socialist Cosmopolitanism*, 182–83.

⁶³ Watts commented on this in reference to the treatment of postcolonial Francophone women’s writing in the 1960s (see Watts, *Packaging Post/Coloniality*, 145–47).

⁶⁴ Cheng, *Discourses of Race and Rising China*, 164.

liberation” from around 1959, I argue that the brief flurry of interest in Peter Abrahams that reached its peak that year is best understood as a coda to the African American works published between 1952 and 1957. Through juxtaposing paratextual presentations of Abrahams with those of Langston Hughes, I show how the former’s biography and works were mobilized in a manner not dissimilar from how Black American works were being used to excoriate the United States. Having said this, the paratextual handling of the Chinese translation of Abrahams’s *Mine Boy* in 1959 is qualitatively different from earlier framings and anticipated a new era in the translation of African literature in important respects. I will return to this towards the end of the section.

The CCP may have first come to recognize the value of aligning itself with the domestic struggle of African Americans in the US before the end of the Second World War when Black leaders made overtures of friendship to the representatives of the Nationalist government in China, hoping that “China would use its special position as one of the Big Four to champion the causes of greatest concern to non-white peoples everywhere”.⁶⁵ However, the Nationalist regime had been unwilling to speak out strongly against racial inequality in America and controversy erupted over Chinese attempts to bar the entry of

⁶⁵ For a detailed discussion, see Gallicchio, *The African American Encounter with Japan and China*, 181–200.

Black GIs into China. According to Gallicchio, the CCP “attracted more favourable attention” by criticizing the government of Chiang Kai-shek’s timid stance on racial discrimination in the US and attacking the Jim Crow system.

From the end of the war to the early years of the PRC, the CCP began to focus their efforts on courting well-known African American critics of US government policy, such as Paul Robeson and W.E.B. Du Bois, who became prominent figures in the socialist world, winning high-profile awards and collaborating with various organizations.⁶⁶ Robeson’s interest in China dated back to the 1930s. He publicly identified himself with the resistance effort against the Japanese invasion and released an album in 1941 called *Chee Lai! Songs of New China*, featuring Mandarin and English songs, one of which (‘Chee Lai’ or “The March of the Volunteers”) would later become the national anthem of the PRC. By 1949, Robeson was receiving unprecedented publicity from the CCP, and his receipt of International Stalin Prize in 1952 further boosted his profile. Mathew D. Johnson adds that the PRC media was “eager to capitalize on Robeson’s dedication to socialist internationalism, and his scathing critiques of the treatment of African Americans in the US”. A “similar pattern” is evident “in the PRC efforts to cultivate a public relationship” with the “pan-Africanist and anti-colonial intellectual” Du Bois who shifted his attention to

⁶⁶ Johnson, ‘From Peace to the Panthers’, 237–42.

China after the war and had become associated with the anti-war movement and the Communist Party in the US by the early 1950s. He was elected to the Presidium of the World Peace Conference in Warsaw in 1951 and was active in a number of peace organizations linked to the socialist world. His public support for the New York-based China Welfare Appeal during the Korean War “made Du Bois a popular figure with China’s state-run media” who lauded his opposition to US foreign policy and co-opted him as part of their anti-American media offensive. The use of figures such as Robeson and Du Bois in the deployment of racism as a critique of American society had thus already been initiated by the early 1950s, but public international backing of the struggles of African Americans would only be offered later in the decade in the pursuit of broader political objectives. In both of these cases, expressions of friendship or support towards China specifically, as well as recognition within the international socialist establishment, led to considerable political and media attention from the CCP and the treatment of these two figures appears to have anticipated not only that of Black African leaders but also of writers later in the decade, as revealed in chapter five.

Open conflict with the imperialist aggressor seemingly provided the impetus for the critique of race and racism in the US to enter the literary sphere. During the Korean War (1950-1953), “propaganda that vilified a depraved and immoral

American enemy had become a normal part of Chinese social and political life” as the government strove to remould “positive or anxious ideas about the United States” among the public into virulent antipathy.⁶⁷ As Andrew Kuech notes, a major part of this drive was publication and distribution of printed materials, including “magazines, books, posters, and pamphlets” in which it was claimed that the “true face” of the United States was being presented. Appearing in the same month and year as *Nuhou*, the publication of *Heiren shixuan* (‘An Anthology of Negro Poetry’) seems to have been deliberately intended in the context of such efforts at rectifying public perceptions of the US. In his afterword, translator Zou Jiang referred directly to the “Resist America, Aid Korea” campaign and suggested that Chinese readers were now extremely well acquainted with the “hypocrisy” of American imperialist “democracy” and its “aggressive face”, an impression allegedly confirmed by those who had lived in the US or interacted with American soldiers.⁶⁸ However, he contended that readers should also consider the “lives, thinking and feelings” of those of the “Black race” who had been in a perennially “exploited and oppressed” position in the US, stating that their poems — the “fruits” of their “tears of blood” — were extremely moving.⁶⁹ Ostensibly addressing stereotypes in a comment

⁶⁷ Kuech, ‘Cultivating, Cleansing, and Performing the American Germ Invasion’, 4–5.

⁶⁸ Zou, ‘Houji’ [Afterword], 153. 在抗美援朝保家卫国的伟大的运动中，大家对于美帝国主义的虚伪民主和侵略面目都有相当深刻的认识了。更有许多在美国住过或者与美军接触过的人以他们的自身的经验生动地说明了这个真理。Zou Jiang was a prominent poet, translator of poetry and scholar (see Xiong, ‘Lun Zou Jiangde wenxue fanyi sixiang’ [‘On Zou Jiang’s Thought of Literature Translation’], 91).

⁶⁹ Zou, 153. 但是我们看看从很久以来就在美国处于被剥削被压迫地位的黑种人民的生活，思想和感情吧！这些诗歌大部分都是他们血泪的结晶，因此它们更加感人。

reminiscent of Yang Changxi, Zou asserted that “in reality, the creative gifts of Black people are actually not inferior”, despite their having suffered “all kinds of limitations and abuse”.⁷⁰ After mentioning Robeson as an example of Black artistic excellence, he went on to refer to Langston Hughes as the “most outstanding” among the poets, noting that he had passed through China in 1933 and been received by the Shanghai literary elite.⁷¹ Beyond his combative opening, however, Zou’s criticism of racial discrimination is muted: the bulk of the afterword deals with the translation backstory. His lack of sustained attention to it perhaps suggests that it was primarily used to couch his translation effort in ideologically appropriate terms.

The Langston Hughes portrayed in the peritexts to the translations of the 1950s is far removed from the relative obscurity to which Zhao Jingshen and Zhang Weilian had consigned him in the late 1920s. His visit to China was the turning point in his literary fortunes in the country, leading initially to a smattering of poetry translations in the 1930s and gradually to the publication of his novel *Not Without Laughter* (*Heilude*) in 1945, almost certainly the first African American novel to be rendered in Chinese. The tone of the brief translator’s introduction to this work is markedly different from the opening to Zou Jiang’s afterword.

⁷⁰ Zou, 153. 实际上黑人的创造才能并不低。虽然受着种种的限制和虐待...

⁷¹ Zou, 154. ... 黑人歌手罗伯逊就是一个很好的例证。...其中最杰出而全世界闻名的是兰斯登·休士。一九三三年他游历苏联归去时，路过中国，上海的文艺界招待过他。

Zhu Xiuxia, writing under the Nationalist regime, justified the importance of the translation by stating that the novel was “called a momentous event in modern American literature”.⁷² While he did refer to racial inequality as being a theme of the book, there is no evidence of hostility to the US.⁷³ He also noted that there were virtually no Chinese translations of novels “that depicted Negro life”.⁷⁴ He also mentioned Hughes’s visit to Shanghai. Similarly, the paratextual framing of an extract from Richard Wright’s *Black Boy* (*Hei Haizi*), published in 1947, contains expressions of sympathy for the plight of Black Americans but offers no direct criticism of the US. It relies instead on a number of quotations from American critics to justify the translation of the text into Chinese. Hughes’s prior reputation, together with his communist sympathies, elevated him to something approaching the status of Du Bois and Robeson.⁷⁵ As though to accentuate this, Zou provided a lengthy and detailed biography of Hughes, the longest of all the writers featured in his anthology of poetry, eulogizing his life as a “modern epic poem”, emphasizing his writing’s

⁷² Zhu, ‘Yizhe xu’ [Translator’s introduction]. cf. 他这本《黑鹿德》...不但称成了现代美国文坛的一大事件...

⁷³ Zhu, ‘Yizhe xu’ [Translator’s introduction]. cf. 他在这部小说里...反映种族上的不平等...

⁷⁴ Zhu, ‘Yizhe xu’ [Translator’s introduction]. cf. 描写黑人生活的小说，似乎我国还没有译品...休士在十年前曾到过上海...

⁷⁵ Zou referred to Hughes’s “propaganda work for the Communist Party” (‘休士最近的工作是共产党宣传’) (see Zou, ‘Lansideng Xiushi’ [Langston Hughes], 142). He “never joined the Communist Party but was a strong communist sympathiser for some of his life” (see Law, *Red Racisms*, 141). Hughes would distance himself from his radical past after being interrogated during the McCarthy Trials in 1953 (see Leach, *Langston Hughes*, 136–37).

rootedness in his “extensive and risk-filled experience”, and highlighting the specific impact of communism on certain works.⁷⁶

As the decade wore on, this combination of the valorisation of Black American writers (especially Hughes), the presentation of their stories as embedded in reality and thus able to reveal the dark truth about American society, and the denunciation of racial discrimination, became the three components of a distinctive paratextual strategy. In 1955, a Soviet English-language anthology for middle school children called *Negro Stories* (*Heiren duanpian xiaoshuo ji*) was translated into the Chinese for China Youth Press; it featured three of Hughes’s stories and listed him as the main author. The long introduction seems, as in the case of *Nuhou*, to be a translation of the original Russian version, discusses Hughes at much greater length than any other featured author, and places a socialist cast on his development as a writer. In the introduction, translated by Yang Zhouhan, Hughes’s works are described as having been “gestated under the direct influence of the liberation ideology trend of the great October Socialist Revolution” and as politically “immature and childish” prior to this.⁷⁷ The book also contains a brief introductory summary

⁷⁶ Zou, ‘Lansideng Xiushi’ [Langston Hughes], 140–44. cf. 他所经历的生活就是一部现代的史诗。...他在诗歌、小说、剧本、论文和自传中记录了他广阔、冒险的经验。...他对于共产主义的关心已经产生了‘再会，基督’...

⁷⁷ Becker, ‘Xuyan’ [Introduction], iv-v. cf. 休士的作品是在伟大十月社会主义革命的解放思潮的直接影响下孕育出来的...休士早期创作的缺点是政治上的不成熟和幼稚...

(of the sort described earlier in this chapter) in which the various anthologized writers are referred to as “modern, progressive American Negro writers” whose stories reveal the “racial discrimination suffered” by Black youth and children, their “miserable daily lives” and their “spirit of defiance”.⁷⁸ Once again, the need to ‘correct’ perceptions of the US seems to have been implicit in the assertion that the “hideous countenance of America’s ruling class” can be “clearly seen” in these stories.

In 1957, an anthology bearing the same Chinese title was published by New Literature and Art Press (‘Xin wenyi chubanshe’), again listing Hughes as the main author and presenting the same selection of his stories. In the translator’s preface to this edition, he is characterized as “an outstanding representative of Negro proletarian literature” and as a “socialist realist writer and poet”; he is also quoted directly.⁷⁹ While also lamenting the “extremely miserable” lives of Black Americans, translator Shi Chengrong also defined “progressive American Negro literature” as part of a broader “progressive American literature” and as having to struggle against both the “unreasonable persecution and obstructions”

⁷⁸ ‘Neirong tiyao’ [Summary of content]. cf. ...作者都是现代美国进步的黑人作家。各篇内容描写美国黑人儿童和青少年所受的种族歧视，以及他们日常的悲惨生活。也描写了黑人青年的反抗精神...从这几篇小说里，可以更清楚地看到美国统治阶级的丑恶嘴脸。

⁷⁹ Shi, ‘Yizhe qianji’ [Translator’s preface], 1. cf. 休士是黑人无产阶级文学的优秀代表，是一个现实主义的作家和诗人。This preface seems to have derived much of its information from the earlier anthology’s Soviet introduction. Among a number of other parallels, both texts refer to the decisive influence of the October Revolution on Hughes, adding that his works lacked political maturity prior to this.

of the “reactionary authorities” as well as the “Negro bourgeoisie’s literature” (including the acolytes of “Négritude”, “the Harlem School”, and the “Negro Art and Literature Renaissance School”) who had collectively been “bought over” by the ruling class.⁸⁰ This rejection of other Black literary forms seems to emphasize that the translation of Black literature was only acceptable to the extent that it hewed to the socialist realist line and affirmed its *testimonial function*; this also explains the dismissiveness with which Hughes’s work prior to his ‘socialist phase’ was treated. Finally, Shi asserted that this form of progressive literature was inseparable from the “peaceful and democratic camp”, thereby enacting, I would argue, what Brown characterizes as a shift from the pre-1949 understanding of the oppression of Black Americans as a proxy for the Chinese experience in the US towards “reading about Blacks and including them in the larger plight of global oppression under which Black Americans also suffer”.⁸¹ This was made possible, Brown argues, through Chinese exposure to figures such as Du Bois who could “re-insert the Black subject and Black agency in representations of Black-ness”. The three-pronged paratextual strategy would be employed in another anthology of poetry with the

⁸⁰ Shi, 2–3. cf. 他们在近两百年中，...所过的生活都是极其悲惨的...美国黑人文学成了美国进步文学中一个主要的特点...它非但遭受到反动当局的种种无理迫害阻挠，而且还要和本民族中被统治阶级收买去的黑人资产阶级文学如“尼加拉主义者”、“哈莱姆学派”、“黑人文艺复兴派”等作斗争。...进步的黑人文学也就成了整个和平民主阵营中不可分割的一环。

⁸¹ Brown, ‘Blackness in Exile: W.E.B. Du Bois’ Role in the Formation of Representations of Blackness as Conceptualized by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)’, 23).

same name as the abovementioned 1952 publication that was also released in 1957, this time by Writers Press ('Zuojia chubanshe').

Returning to the abovementioned afterword to the extract from Abrahams's *Tell Freedom*, also published in 1957, certain parallels with the paratexts to Black American works are immediately evident. The translator, writing under the penname 'Qi Qing', referred to Abrahams as "a progressive writer who has sprung forth from the thriving South African people's movement" while describing his works as "depicting the lives of South African people, opposing racial oppression, and promoting national independence".⁸² From the paucity of information provided on his published works (only *The Path of Thunder* and *Mine Boy* were mentioned) and his life, it may be inferred that very little was known about Abrahams and that his autobiography itself may have been the primary reference. The translator attempted to establish Abrahams's credentials in terms of the text's narrow testimonial function by noting that the book relates "the author's life in a Johannesburg slum for twenty-two years" and that the extract "narrates the personal experience of the author at the age of fifteen".⁸³

As an autobiographical work, *Tell Freedom* was amenable to deployment for

⁸² Qi, 'Yihouji', 136. cf. 彼得·阿伯拉罕...是在今天南非蓬勃的民族运动中涌现出来的一位进步作家。...他还著有“小伙子矿工”、“怒吼”等描写南非人民生活, 反对种族压迫, 主张民族独立的作品。

⁸³ Qi, 136. cf. “关于自由的故事”是一部自传小说, 描述作者在约翰尼斯堡贫民窟中 22 年的生活。这里选译的...是描述作者十五岁时的一段亲身经历。仅仅在这短短的生活片段里, 我们就可以看出作者对南非人民的深挚同情, 对殖民主义者的种族歧视的严重抗议。

ideological purposes along the same lines as paratextual biographies in other cases. Abrahams's protest against racial discrimination in the extract is registered through the description of his experience of working in a hotel alongside a Black co-worker Jim whose life and relationships have been marred by backbreaking work and ongoing harassment and imprisonment when he has fallen afoul of South Africa's convoluted 'pass' system.⁸⁴ Abrahams then describes his own deterioration as he is subjected to the drudgery and petty racism of daily life in the hotel, culminating in a confrontation with his white boss who refuses to pay his outstanding wages.⁸⁵ Although the bulk of the three-pronged strategy seems to have been operational here, praise for Abrahams himself is limited and confined to a few comments about his readable writing style, which is described as "simple" and "concise".⁸⁶

The selection of this extract may have been motivated by its effective depiction of how racial discrimination functions as a tool of class oppression by revealing how work itself as well as the legal gauntlet and abuses that 'non-whites' had to navigate to obtain and retain employment in South Africa leads inevitably to Marxian alienation. Terry Eagleton states that, for Marx, "alienation is a multiple process, divorcing the worker from nature, from her product and the

⁸⁴ Abrahams, *Tell Freedom: Memories of Africa*, 207–11.

⁸⁵ Abrahams, 212–16.

⁸⁶ Qi, 136. cf. 阿拉伯罕的作品文字浅近而简洁...

labour process itself, from her own body, but also from the communal life activity that makes of her a truly human being”.⁸⁷ In this extract, after speaking poignantly of Jim’s loss of his lover through his imprisonment, Abrahams describes his fifteen-year-old self as moving “with the heavy slowness of a leaden man” and as having forgotten the “feel of the sun”; his sister finally insists that he no longer work at the hotel, pointing out that he has become ill and that neither she nor their mother see him anymore.⁸⁸

As expressed by the translator, the target of Abrahams’s “earnest protest against racial discrimination” in this case was simply the “colonialists” rather than any particular state. Whereas, as Lahaie, Barnai and Bethlehem note, the original Russian-language introduction to the Soviet edition of *The Path of Thunder* “makes a point of denouncing purportedly civilized ‘English capitalists’ who carry out ‘shameless colonial politics’”, the assignation “colonialists” here, in the absence of further detail, risked conflating the ruling white minority in South Africa with the more recent invasions and colonisations of other parts of the Third World.⁸⁹ Nevertheless, the absence of further detail suggests that the specific conditions of a given society were less important than the instances of racial oppression that could be used to critique the masters of the global

⁸⁷ Eagleton, *Marx and Freedom*, 28.

⁸⁸ Abrahams, *Tell Freedom: Memories of Africa*, 211–14.

⁸⁹ Lahaie, Barnai, and Bethlehem, ‘Choreographing Ideology: On the Ballet Adaptation of Peter Abrahams’ *The Path of Thunder* in the Soviet Union’, 288.

capitalist order of which the US was the primary representative. That South African stories could somehow be wielded against a universal enemy that assumed both imperialist and colonialist guises seems to be epitomized by the 1959 publication of *Yinling bande xiaosheng* ('Silver ringing laughter'), an anthology featuring translations of the same extract from *Tell Freedom*, another South African story called 'Cow', and Albert Maltz's 'Without Laughter'.⁹⁰ The blurb to this publication asserts that the three stories "expose the racial discrimination and oppression of the Black race by the American racists and the colonialists".⁹¹ Having summarized each story, it ends with the affirmation that they relentlessly "unmask" the "hideous" and "savage" "countenance" of racial discrimination, reviving the familiar imagery used to frame Black American works. Although the slim volume is dominated by the American story that occupies most of its pages and from which its title is derived, the sense of equivalency conveyed by the paratextual treatment of all three stories is suggestive of a seamless transnational space in which racial oppression must be confronted. This juxtaposition of texts may emanate from the milieu of the late fifties in which "solidarity with anticolonial struggles", as Paola Iovene suggests, had become a more "prevalent" aspect of the CCP's "cultural

⁹⁰ The title of the anthology is the Chinese rendering of the name of American communist writer Maltz's short story. I have not been able to locate the source text for 'Cow' or establish who its author was, only that they were likely to have been of European/British descent from the Chinese rendering of their name.

⁹¹ 'Neirong shuoming' [Explanation of content]. cf. 本书包括三篇揭露美国种族主义者和殖民主义者对黑种人的歧视和压迫的短篇小说。...把种族压迫丑恶残暴的嘴脸暴露无遗。

agenda”.⁹² By contrast, as shown earlier, ideological assaults on the image of the US had been the main reason for deployments of race in the early fifties. It is also worth noting that this anthology was released by Writers Press, which became the pre-eminent publisher of African literature over the next few years and to which I will return in the final chapter.

A watershed year for Abrahams’s status in Chinese literary circles, 1959 would also see the publication of the Chinese edition of *Mine Boy* (*Kuanggong*) and, crucially, a review of the book in the premier translation journal *Shijie wenxue* (*World Literature*). The book’s afterword notes that it was the product of a joint translation effort by twenty-four students of the graduating class of Fudan University’s Foreign Literature Department in 1958 and that it represented one of the achievements of their participation in the reform of their school during the Great Leap Forward, a strikingly different framing strategy from those employed for other African works of the era which never mentioned China’s internal politics.⁹³ At a moment in which African literature was experiencing a breakthrough in China for reasons to be discussed in the next chapter, the

⁹² Iovene, *Tales of Futures Past*, 66.

⁹³ The translators stated that “the climax in the industrial and agricultural production of the Great Leap Forward powerfully impelled the development of culture and education undertakings” (‘一九五八年工农业生产大跃进的高潮有力地推动了文化教育事业的发展’). They claimed to have produced lengthy syllabi and reference materials within a brief three-week period and referred to the translation of the novel as one of the “achievements” of their labours (‘在短短三个星期之内编写了三十多万字的各种教学大纲和参考资料，这本《矿工》的翻译也是我们一项劳动成果’) (see Le, ‘Yi houji’ [Translation afterword], 224–25).

novel's appeal almost certainly lay in its focus on the working class in an African setting and its overtly Marxist elements.⁹⁴ Moreover, the review and the afterword both endorse a vision of a multiracial worker alliance against imperialism/colonialism, as do the paratexts to other works by Black writers.⁹⁵

However briefly, these paratexts finally confer on Abrahams a status approximating that of Hughes. Paradoxically, this elevation entailed, as with the case of Hughes, the use of what Watts terms a paratextual “curriculum vitae” in order “to remove the work from the realm of creative fiction, endow it with anthropological authenticity, and thrust it unambiguously into the realm of testimony”.⁹⁶ Both the afterword and the review refer to him as a “progressive writer from the Union of South Africa”, while the former details a number of the menial jobs he performed as a youth and provides the hitherto most

⁹⁴ While acknowledging the presence of Marxist discourses, John-Philippe Wade argues that “Abrahams’s recourse to Marxism was determined by a need to resolve certain severe weaknesses and limitations of ‘actually existing’ liberalism” (see Wade, “‘Song of the City’ and ‘Mine Boy’: The ‘Marxist’ Novels of Peter Abrahams”, 89).

⁹⁵ For an example from a discussion about Hughes, see Shi, ‘Yizhe qianji’ [Translator’s preface], 1–2. The introduction to *Nuhou* also deals with this theme, as mentioned earlier. Here, the protagonist of the book, Xuma, has an epiphany in which he realizes the “truth” that “whether they are Black or white, all [his colleagues] are workers who suffer oppression”; he then leads a strike and the “progressive white” Paddy stands with him, “jointly opposing the white boss’s oppression” (‘他认清了不论是黑人或白人，凡是劳动者都要受尽剥削的道理。他站起来了，领导了罢工...进步的白人派迪也和朱玛在一起，共同反抗白人老板的压迫’) (see Yan, ‘Xingxing zhi huo, keyi liao yuan — du Kuanggong’ [A single spark can start a prairie fire — Reading *Kuanggong*], 158; Le, ‘Yi houji’ [Translation afterword], 223–24). As Wade contends, however, this reading of Paddy’s solidarity with the Black and coloured workers may be undercut by his status as a dissenter, and the actual history of mine strikes in South Africa suggests that worker unity across the colour bar during the forties and fifties was largely non-existent (see Wade, “‘Song of the City’ and ‘Mine Boy’: The ‘Marxist’ Novels of Peter Abrahams”, 100).

⁹⁶ Watts, *Packaging Post/Coloniality*, 146.

exhaustive list of his published works.⁹⁷ Having established his working class origins and his reputation as a published writer, Abrahams's race and proximity to oppression are then figured as the basis for the representation of his works as a form of testimony. Since "he was born into the proletariat and is a coloured on top of this" and "his personal history itself depicts a period in the history of white imperialist aggression", he is able to portray "these kinds of realities, and he sounds a roar of defiance for the multitudes with the same fate".⁹⁸ The afterword then constructs Abrahams's writings as revelations of his activism:

In *Nuhou* [*The Path of Thunder*], he exposes the cruel face and bloody methods of the imperialists who use racial discrimination to divide and rule the people of the colonial territories through the tragic love story of a young coloured man and a white woman. In the autobiographical novel *Ziyoude gushi* [*Tell Freedom*], he depicts, and angrily charges imperialists with, a range of crimes in a similarly profound manner. In this book *Kuanggong* [*Mine Boy*], the author writes about the intense conflicts that arise between Black and coloured proletarians and the white colonialists, the tragic circumstances that befall the native people and their longing for a better life, and the demand for an end to racial discrimination as well as the call and struggle for freedom and liberation.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Le, 'Yi houji' [Translation afterword], 221. cf. 彼得·阿伯拉罕是南非联邦的一位进步作家。...九岁时，他就做送货工人...1939年，他在轮船上做火夫... The next paragraph lists the English and Chinese names of the following books: *Dark Testament*, *Song of the City*, *Path of Thunder* (sic.), *Wild Conquest*, *Mine Boy*, *Return to Goli* and *The Wreath of Udomo* (sic.).

⁹⁸ Le, 222. cf. 他出身于无产阶级，又是有色人，他本身的经历就反照出帝国主义的白人的一段侵略史。他用笔刻画了那种现实，为千千万万同样命运的人发出反抗的怒吼。Similar sentiments are expressed in the opening paragraph of the review (see Yan, 'Xingxing zhi huo, keyi liao yuan — du *Kuanggong*' [A single spark can start a prairie fire — Reading *Kuanggong*], 157).

⁹⁹ Le, 222. cf. 在《怒吼》这本小说里，他通过一个有色青年和白种姑娘的恋爱的悲剧故事，揭露了帝国主义者利用种族歧视来分化和统治殖民地人民的残酷面貌和血腥手段。‘自由的故事’这本自传性的小说也同样深刻地描绘和愤怒地控诉了帝国主义者的种种罪行。在这本《矿工》里作者再一次写出了无产

Although the familiar denunciation of racial discrimination and the imagery of a cruel face being unmasked are recapitulated here, the connection of these aspects to the broader struggle for national liberation and the complexity of race relations is made much more explicit. This interweaving of Abrahams's personal life and works with the anti-imperialist struggle positions him at the cusp of a new era in which the translation of African literature, as an emanation of the CCP's contemporaneous foreign policy agenda, would largely displace the relatively minor enterprise of translating progressive Black literature. The afterword subsequently continues to accentuate the testimonial function of the text through a comprehensive synopsis of the plot that is punctuated with questions and exclamations reminding the reader about the truthfulness of the text.¹⁰⁰ Many of these elements are also present in the review but it accentuates the function of bearing witness to the real situation in South Africa by referring to the impact of government legislation on the lives of the characters directly and suggesting that the "shadows of Xuma and his comrades-in-arms may be seen" in the real protests in Durban that were happening in 1959.¹⁰¹ The

的黑人和有色人，同白殖民者之间的尖锐矛盾，写出了当地人民悲惨的境遇和对美好的生活的憧憬，也写出了要求消灭种族歧视和得到自由和解放的呼声和斗争。

¹⁰⁰ After taking pains to describe the Xuma's impoverished state, the reader is asked whether this does not "definitely portray how the oppressed people of the colonial territories are living" ("这不是绝大多数受压迫的殖民地人民的活生生的写照吗?"). Elsewhere, in elaborating on Xuma's realization of that "those who oppress Black people are only a section of the white people" and these also oppress whites, the reader is reminded that it is "really like this!" ("压迫黑人的只是一部分白人，而这一部分白人也压迫着另一部分白人。正是这样!") (see Le, 222–23).

¹⁰¹ The review states that, through laws such as those enforcing "racial segregation" and the "pass laws", Xuma and the other "multitudes of Blacks and coloureds" were "trapped in extremely miserable conditions" ("...这六十多种法律...使朱玛和其他千百万黑人和有色人陷于极端痛苦的境地。如“种族隔离法”、“通行证发”...'). The reviewer, Yan Mu, then mentions that "thousands of Africans risked brutal police suppression at

afterword encapsulates the role of a book such as *Mine Boy* in the China of the late fifties as educational in that it allows Chinese readers to “understand” the people of Africa and their “urgent” struggle at a time when “the whole ‘Dark Continent’ is alight with raging flames”.¹⁰² The battles and tribulations of Xuma and the others were thus emblematic not only of those of South Africans but of the entire continent. This anticipated the expansion of African literature’s testimonial function beyond exposing and protesting racial injustices to documenting revolutionary movements and anti-colonial struggles as China inaugurated a new race-based discursive strategy to place itself “on the top of a global racial hierarchy” in order to be seen as “leading the ‘coloured peoples’ on the bottom towards liberation” — also discussed in chapters four and five.¹⁰³

Despite this burst of belated publicity, however, Peter Abrahams would fade into obscurity again, as suggested by the absence of any further translations of his works until the 1980s. Compared to the coverage of Langston Hughes’s life and achievements across multiple paratexts, only the afterword to *Mine Boy*

the port of Durban to become involved in a massive demonstration opposing racial oppression” (‘在南非的德班港口，有数万非洲人冒着残暴镇压，卷入了反抗种族压迫的大示威’) and ends by relating this, and other struggles, to Xuma and his comrades-in-arms (‘在这些斗争中，我们好像看到了朱玛和他的战友们的影子’) (see Yan, ‘Xingxing zhi huo, keyi liao yuan — du Kuanggong’ [A single spark can start a prairie fire — Reading Kuanggong], 156–57). It is not clear whether Yan is applying the laws of the Apartheid system somewhat incorrectly since *Mine Boy* was released in 1946, two years before the National Party came to power in South Africa. The demonstration alluded to here is the women-led Beer Hall protest of June 1959.

¹⁰² Le, 224. cf. ...这是一本对于我们很有教育意义的书。在今天，整个“黑暗大陆”已经燃起了熊熊烈焰，...我们需要那里的人民和斗争更为迫切...

¹⁰³ Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, chap. ‘Race as Nationality (1949-2012)’.

begins adequately to characterize Abrahams's achievements while also omitting biographical details beyond those concerning his early life. Unlike Hughes, Robeson and Du Bois (as well as African writers who would become prominent after him), Abrahams lacked the personal exposure to China or Chinese writers and functionaries, was not literally embedded in his people's struggle, and had turned his back on communism. It is also possible that, despite the various appropriations of his biography, he remained ideologically suspect, as implied by the warning in the introductory peritext to *Pili qiancheng*, the 1959 English edition of *The Path of Thunder*, in which readers are cautioned that the "emotional appeal" of the book is "coloured by bourgeois ideology".¹⁰⁴ This concern about the "bourgeois" aspects of Abrahams's writing is also registered in the afterword to *Mine Boy* where his "creative methods" were perceived to be influenced by "naturalism" rather than socialist realism.¹⁰⁵ Living in exile and inclined towards liberalism by the late fifties, Abrahams was ideologically ill-suited to the role of heroic standard bearer of African literature in China, and cultural mediators would turn instead to, among others, Senegalese writer Ousmane Sembène.

¹⁰⁴ 'Neirong jianjie' 内容简介 [Synopsis of content]. cf. 但是书中也有些强调带有资产阶级思想意识的色彩...

¹⁰⁵ Le, 'Yi houji' [Translation afterword], 224. cf. 其次, 作者的创作方法似乎带有自然主义色彩...

Chapter 4

On the road to Tashkent: The Chinese literary establishment's reluctant embrace of Black African literature (1953–1958)

4.1 Becoming 'coloured' (?): Bandung, race and China's colour strategy

Just as in the 1920s when the involvement of left-wing intellectuals in the Comintern seems to have spurred some interest in Black literatures, China's foreign policy objectives after 1955 appear to have propelled the engagement of the literary establishment with African literature. However, as I will argue in the next section, this engagement was characterized primarily by rhetoric rather than by action until the latter became unavoidable. The background to those developments is presented in this section, which summarizes the contributions of a number of scholars from beyond the translation/literary sphere and functions as an introduction to both the second part of this chapter and the final chapter. I will consider the role of race in the early PRC and argue that, despite the ostensibly egalitarian and internationalist ethos of communist ideology and the fervent condemnation of racial discrimination against Blacks during this era, the racialized Chinese worldview that had emerged before 1949 continued to hold sway.¹ Nevertheless, the CCP understood that China needed the peoples of

¹ Yinghong Cheng refers to the "global racial hierarchy" constructed in the nineteenth century (described in chapter one) in which "Africa and black people constitute a global blackness as the Otherness of global

the “Third World”, including those of Africa, to break out of its international isolation in the mid-1950s. The Bandung Conference in 1955 provided China with a platform to reach out to Asian and African countries and had three significant consequences. Firstly, the focus on cultural exchanges, a key outcome of the conference, would ultimately facilitate the translation of African literature, although, as I will show in the next section, cultural mediators mostly continued to neglect or overlook Black African literatures until the eve of the Asian African Writers’ Bureau Conference in Tashkent in 1958. Secondly, these efforts resulted in unprecedented shifts in the representation of Blackness and Africa in Chinese media discourses. Drawing on the work of Vera Leigh Fennell in particular, I outline these shifts as they anticipate later paratextual framings of African literature. Lastly, I briefly discuss the emergence of a deliberate strategy in the CCP’s external relations which sought to foster closer relationships with non-white countries by presenting China as a ‘coloured’ or ‘Black’ nation. This strategy suggests that the CCP had identified Black Africa as a specific target for efforts to court international support by the late 1950s, an insight that may shed light on the timing of the surge in translation activity dealt with in the next section. However, as I will show in chapter five, this strategy diverged from discursive strategies around Africa and Blackness being deployed in publications for consumption by internal reading publics.

Chineseness” and sees this as fundamentally unchanged through the early years of the PRC up until contemporary times (see Cheng, *Discourses of Race and Rising China*, 164).

Imitating the Soviet example, “racial theories became taboo following the communist takeover of China in 1949”.² Social sciences such as anthropology and sociology were attacked as “bourgeois” and ‘reformed’ anthropologists led propaganda campaigns “with the aim of eradicating racial discrimination”.³ Genetics was actively suppressed, its leading western proponents and their ideas deliberately associated with “the very worst of the world’s racism”.⁴ For all this vehement repudiation of racial theories in the scientific domain and the ongoing criticism of racial discrimination in especially the United States (as shown in the last chapter), it remains unclear to what extent the intelligentsia were genuinely hostile to these theories or simply following the dominant ideological trends.⁵ Moreover, despite the anti-racist rhetoric, both the Soviet Union and China had been influenced by “international racialized thinking in the early decades of the twentieth century” as reflected, for example, in their mutual interest in eugenics.⁶ As in imperial China, “racial and ethnic hierarchies” had also existed in imperial Russia. With this historical context in mind, it is not surprising that the Soviets did not jettison race entirely. Instead, races were constructed as the

² Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, chap. ‘Race as Nationality (1949-2012)’.

³ Dikötter, ‘Race as Nationality (1949-2012)’.

⁴ Schneider, *Biology and Revolution in Twentieth-Century China*, 133. Laurence A. Schneider shows that genetic theories themselves could be deployed in attacks on Western racism, by arguing that they, for example, perpetuate “the belief in a hierarchy of races with immutable human qualities” (see Schneider, 118–33).

⁵ Zhou Jianren, for example, the brother of literary giants Lu Xun and Zhou Zuoren and “author of numerous pamphlets advocating eugenics in the 1930s”, now “became an official mouthpiece of the party and published a radical critique of eugenics and racial discrimination” (see Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, chap. ‘Race as Nationality (1949-2012)’).

⁶ Law, *Red Racisms*, 10. This has to be qualified by adding that the Soviet Union was “the only country where eugenics was officially denounced by governmental legislation”. However, despite the persecution and execution of prominent geneticists, “the attempt to build a Bolshevik eugenics continued” from the mid-1930s (see Law, 16–17).

“ancient, historical, primordial ethnic groups which were to be classified, shaped and privileged as the building blocks of nations” and the role of the state was seen as forging “modern nationalities” out of these groups, “an essential step on the road to socialism”.⁷ As Ian Law notes, the key difference with Western racial hierarchism was that, in official Soviet discourse, the perceived relative backwardness of certain groups was not construed as being due to “innate racial or biological characteristics” but rather as a purely socio-historical phenomenon. This type of teleological view appears to be implicated in the CCP’s appeal to ‘class’ as a unifying factor while retaining, as Dikötter argues, the “politically vital distinction” between the Han ‘majority’ and the ethnic ‘minorities’; the latter were often represented as “less evolved people who needed the moral and political guidance of the Han to ascend the scales of civilization” in a manner reminiscent of “the racial taxonomies used by the revolutionaries at the beginning of the twentieth century”.⁸ Thus, as Law suggests, “the modernized, civilized, superiority of Russians in the Soviet Union and of Han in the PRC with their associated chauvinism was realized in national policies for ordering and ruling other backward, inferiorized, ethnoracial groups”, thereby allowing racialized thinking to continue to function covertly under the veneer of socialist policies and language.⁹

⁷ Law, *Red Racisms*, 17.

⁸ Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, chap. ‘Race as Nationality (1949-2012)’.

⁹ Law, *Red Racisms*, 144.

These attitudes towards internal ‘others’ would ultimately be mirrored in “Soviet and Chinese relations with Africa” in which Law discerns a “strong parallel” between the two states, including “the fostering of external ties and relations in the context of paternalism and the persistence of internal racial hostility [towards Black people]”.¹⁰ Philip Hsiaopong Liu considers the account of Emmanuel Hevi, a Ghanaian medical student, who wrote a book called *An African Student in China* (1963) in which he mentioned numerous instances of discrimination.¹¹ Contesting the dismissiveness with which a number of scholars treated Hevi’s account, Liu refers to declassified government documents to show that Black visitors to China, from as early as 1956 onwards, endured openly racist abuse and discrimination. In addition, the living conditions and stipends provided for African students also did not match those of white students from socialist bloc countries and romantic or sexual relationships between male African students and Chinese women were met with harassment and prohibition. These and other issues led to the majority of African students seeking to leave China by the early 1960s. I suggest that these events expose the chasm between official discourses and the actual situation of living among a community with a strongly racialized world view, given that

¹⁰ Law, 112.

¹¹ Liu, ‘Petty Annoyances? Revisiting John Emmanuel Hevi’s *An African Student in China* after 50 Years’, 132–42.

they occurred during the high tide of anti-colonial Sino-African solidarity in the Chinese media and paratexts to African works, as will be shown.

By the mid-1950s, however, China, reliant on the “socialist bloc led by Moscow” and facing “diplomatic isolation imposed by the West”, was hardly in a position to assert any kind of leadership over what would become known as the “Third World”.¹² Moreover, despite seeing itself as relatively dependent on the Soviet Union between 1950 and 1957, Joseph Tse-Hei Lee notes that “the Sino-Soviet alliance was short-lived because it was a result of hard negotiating, complicated strategic calculations and reluctant compromises between Mao and Stalin”. Increasingly isolated on the world stage between the main Cold War rivals, the CCP would ultimately seek to “promote its own long term foreign policy interests by weakening the hold” of the West and the USSR over the Third World.¹³ Fennell argues that this agenda entailed “uniting with the global revolutionary forces” in newly independent or decolonising states, an objective seen as essential not only for ending the CCP’s international isolation but also for ensuring the “continued success of its own domestic revolution”.¹⁴ In its

¹² Lee, ‘China’s Third World Policy from the Maoist Era to the Present’, 4–5.

¹³ Fennell, ‘Race’, 251–53.

¹⁴ This also included public expressions of support for Black Americans and the Civil Rights movement in the US by the 1960s. Mao called Black Americans “an extremely powerful revolutionary force” and described their efforts as part of “the general struggle of all the people in the world against US imperialism” that in turn was a “component” of “contemporary world revolution” (see Frazier, *The East Is Black*, 109). Although this “imagined international alliance” was popular in the Chinese media, Cheng asserts that it failed to leave “any enduring imprint on the Chinese perception of Black people” and cites the “Chinese students’ anti-Black movement in the 1980s” as testifying to the “transient nature of this political alignment” (see Cheng, *Discourses of Race and Rising China*, 190–91).

external relations with Asian, African, and Latin American states, the CCP would come to pursue a strategy of providing material aid “in the form of arms, technology, infrastructure projects and low interest or interest free loans”. More importantly, for the present discussion, the CCP began to implement a “discursive strategy” quite early on in which it “told a story about itself to both a domestic and global audience” through its “vast media network”. This ‘story’ also incorporated unprecedented media representations of Africa and Africans. While Fennell’s work shows that these representations were already circulating in the media by 1955, I will argue that they were largely absent from the translation domain until the translation of African works began in late 1958 — the subject of the next section.

The Bandung Asian–African Conference of 1955 was “one of the first key sites” where China sought to portray itself as “a racial ally in solidarity and struggle and as an anti-imperialist counterweight to the West” in the eyes of the Third World.¹⁵ Lee asserts that Bandung was a “pivotal moment” in two key respects. It represented a milestone in “an alternative chronology of world events organized by intellectuals and activists of colour who had been subjected to forms of colonialism, racism, and class oppression”, including previous conferences that had begun in 1900, such as pan-African and pan-Asian

¹⁵ Frazier, *The East Is Black*, 29.

congresses and the League Against Imperialism in 1927.¹⁶ It was also “the culmination of connections and relationships that had crossed the Indian Ocean world for centuries” and the attendees often cited their shared experience “of the history of Western imperialism in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East since the sixteenth century” as well as their common principled rejection of racism and cultural discrimination. Although there were also a wide range of factors dividing the countries in attendance, this common history of “Western aggression” was seen as a basis for a contingent solidarity.

Six of the twenty-nine delegations to the conference hailed from Africa (Egypt, Ethiopia, Liberia, Libya, Sudan and “soon-to-be independent Ghana”) and representatives of various African liberation movements attended as “observers”.¹⁷ According to Fennell, a number of scholars suggest that Afro-Asian solidarity was largely symbolic at the conference itself; the “few Africa-specific issues” on the agenda and the absence of most of the important pan-Africanist leaders hindered the established of tangible diplomatic structures to facilitate ongoing communication and cooperation.¹⁸ More significant for the

¹⁶ Lee, *Making a World after Empire*, 9–10.

¹⁷ Fennell, ‘Race’, 261.

¹⁸ Christopher J. Lee elaborates on China’s primary concerns at the conference, stating that it wished to legitimate itself “in the purview of its regional neighbours” (see Lee, *Making a World after Empire*, 12). Robeson Taj Frazier, however, insists that China’s courting of the various groupings of African attendees during the conference was “no mere discursive strategy” and led in due course to the commencement of the PRC’s direct involvement on the African continent. He suggests that the links forged during the conference would ultimately lead to tangible aid for “several of these states and national liberation groups”. In the short term, diplomatic recognition from Egypt led to the establishment of an embassy in Cairo in 1956 that “became one of

purposes of this discussion, however, is Fennell's contention that the conference inaugurated an Afro-Asian "political solidarity" at the level of the "official discourse" of the CCP, a point to which I will return below.¹⁹ As Vijay Prashad notes, the issue on which the attendees expressed the greatest degree of unity was their unanimous condemnation of "racialism as a means of cultural suppression"; this inspired the "most powerful agreement at Bandung" concerning the importance of "cultural co-operation" between the peoples represented at the conference.²⁰ The final communique enjoined countries to learn about each other and engage in "mutual cultural exchange" in all aspects of culture from the arts to science and technology. This focus on cultural cooperation and its explicit deployment within the common struggle against the suppression of the cultures of those whom Prashad refers to as the "darker nations" of the world would have important implications for China's changing approach to Black Africa, including, ultimately, the translation of its literature.

Fennell asserts that the "official discourse about Sino-African 'brotherhood'" was first promoted in "print media, specifically newspaper articles, editorials and/or announcements" during the coverage of the conference.²¹ Prior to this,

several important ambassadorial spaces where the PRC extended itself to visiting African delegations and diplomats" (see Frazier, *The East Is Black*, 29).

¹⁹ Fennell, 'Race', 261.

²⁰ Prashad, *The Darker Nations*, 45.

²¹ Fennell, 'Race', 256.

she claims that the Chinese press had virtually ignored Africa, an attitude consistent with what I have contended about the Chinese literary establishment with regards to Black or African literature in previous chapters.²² Her contention that “the discursive frameworks expressed in these newspaper articles became the everyday language and commonplace understanding of black African racial identity for the revolutionary Chinese masses” is accurate as a rhetorical formulation of what CCP ideologues hoped to achieve in order to legitimate increased diplomatic and cultural exchanges with Africa but probably overstated as a description of the actual situation, given the persistence of the racialized world view and the evidence of racism in China discussed earlier. Taking its cue from the conference, the media highlighted the significance of cooperation “through cultural exchanges and economic trade” between Asian and African states in order to build relationships based on “culture, friendship and peace”. Perhaps recognizing that Africa had long been, when it was not entirely neglected, little more than an exotic curiosity to Chinese reading publics (see chapter two), the media promoted a “narrative of a common economic history [with China]”, characterized by “vigorous” development “based on agriculture and the technological and cultural products derived from it” in an attempt to make African states and people seem more familiar and

²² Despite the relative marginalization of African issues and participants at the conference, the rhetorical tone of the media coverage in China may have been set by Chinese premier and foreign minister Zhou Enlai’s “rousing speech” in which he condemned racial discrimination (specifically denouncing South Africa’s “nascent apartheid policies”) and argued for “fundamental human rights without distinction based on race or skin colour”; the speech was printed in full in *The People’s Daily* (*Renmin ribao*), “the official newspaper” of the CCP’s Central Committee. Fennell draws mainly on articles in this important publication (see Fennell, 256–58).

accessible. A second theme of the coverage revolved around “their common recent experience of colonialism” that “had hindered the development of cultural exchanges and direct trade between China and Africa”, leading to the relative backwardness of the two regions. Finally, as Fennell indicates, racism emerged as another key theme in media discourse. Not only, as elsewhere, was it repeatedly condemned and repudiated but Zhou Enlai had stated that “the formerly colonised states of Africa and Asia had connected racism to the denial of sovereignty by the colonialist states” and that its elimination was thus “fundamental to state power in the former colonies”. While these discursive moves in the media sphere would seem to have indirectly facilitated the later surge in the translation of African works, I argue that the universalist emphasis on similarities in ancient history as well as in the respective experiences of colonialism and racism, when inserted into the paratextual frameworks of such texts, risked obscuring elements unique to the African experience and suppressing aesthetic features in favour of the testimonial function described in the previous chapter. It seems likely that the themes emphasized in this coverage were overwhelmingly the artefacts of the Bandung conference itself, with the caveat that, in addition to the lack of prior evidence of media interest in African issues mentioned by Fennell, no paratexts to translations of Black African works are available from the period of the conference. Likewise, the single example of a paratext to a Black African work published prior to the conference does not contain any references to such themes (see section 4.2).

Finally, the Bandung moment appears not only to have raised the visibility of Black Africa in the Chinese media sphere but initiated a related but slightly divergent deployment of race in the CCP's external relations. The putative *non-whiteness* of the incipient coalition at Bandung and the absence of the *white* superpowers afforded China an opportunity to appeal to "a shared status of racially discriminated peoples of the world" or begin to employ what Liu and Cheng call a "colour strategy".²³ Kelley and Esch's article, provocatively titled "Black like Mao", gestures towards the outcome of efforts to court African countries by the early 1960s; they state that the status of the Chinese "as people of colour", cultivated to "facilitate alliance building", "served as a powerful political tool in mobilizing support from Africans and African-descended people".²⁴ Borrowing the phrase from Liu and Cheng, therefore, I argue that this strategy came to entail both the explicit and tacit re-positioning of China as a "nation of colour" in its interactions with Black interlocutors in the diplomatic, political and cultural spheres, a tactic de-emphasized in media and official discourses regarding transracial unity domestically. For Cheng and Liu, this phrase refers, at minimum, to a discursive strategy used by Chinese officials and leaders with Black foreigners in which they invoked a shared racial status (as people of colour), often in opposition to white enemies, while Cheng implies that it could be extended to include broader attempts to reach out to African

²³ Cheng, *Discourses of Race and Rising China*, 189–90.

²⁴ Kelley and Esch, 'Black like Mao', 9.

countries through, for example, inviting African students to study in China.²⁵ However, Cheng observes that “official policy statements” did not typically use language with racial connotations and Fennell’s analysis of domestic media coverage, while affirming the centrality of race in China’s dealings with Africa after 1955, does not mention explicit references to Chinese as coloured or Black.²⁶ Such references may have been seen as unnecessarily extreme in such a racialized context, especially since the official discourse on Sino-African brotherhood in general “and the foreign policies that emanated from it...may not have reflected the personal feelings of high-ranking members of the Communist Party or of the Chinese masses about blackness, black people, or Africa”.²⁷ Similarly, the language of overt racial identification is virtually absent from the paratexts that accompanied the new translations of African works from 1958 onwards, highlighting the persistent complexity of the status of Blackness and Africa in the Chinese imaginary.

It is possible that the “colour strategy” was also discernible in other efforts, such as the high-profile hosting of prominent Black American (and later African)

²⁵ Liu cites Mao himself in a meeting with African visitors in 1958 in which he stated: “[Westerners] say we Chinese are useless, we coloured people are useless, we are dirty, and we are not elegant. Our race seems to be the same with you Africans...in front of African friends, I feel very equal” (see Liu, ‘Petty Annoyances? Revisiting John Emmanuel Hevi’s *An African Student in China after 50 Years*’, 135). Dikötter adds that, in their dealings in Africa, “China tried to capitalize on a common racial identity, urging that ‘we blacks stick together’ against the ‘white race’, an idea that was met with scepticism on the African side” (see Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, chap. ‘Race as Nationality (1949-2012)’).

²⁶ Cheng, *Discourses of Race and Rising China*, 190.

²⁷ Fennell, ‘Race’, 263.

leaders and intellectuals as a form of public solidarity and recognition often not afforded to these people in Western countries.²⁸ While I tentatively suggest that the translation of African literature may also be seen as an offshoot of such efforts, its trajectory did not parallel initiatives in the political or diplomatic domain sketched here for reasons that I will elaborate on in the next section. As I have shown, there is also evidence that racialized thinking continued to function in various guises during this period, despite the increasingly overt and vociferous support for the struggles of Blacks worldwide from the late 1950s onwards. I therefore argue for the essential *continuity* of the situation that existed prior to 1949 as far as race was concerned and speculate that it may have remained relevant to policies pursued by cultural mediators in the translation sphere.

4.2 Putting the ‘Afro’ in Afro-Asian: Mao Dun, the journal *Yiwen*, and institutional inertia (1953–1958)

Just as the CCP’s political involvement in the Comintern in the 1920s appears to have impacted the translation scene of that era, the forging of the Bandung

²⁸ The hospitality and public recognition lavished on W.E.B. Du Bois and his wife Shirley Graham Du Bois in the hopes that his “immense intellectual stature in Africa could open doors for alliances with the new, post-colonial African nations” is a useful example of how this colour strategy could be implemented. On his much-publicized visit to China in 1959, at a time when the aged scholar was being treated like a pariah in his own country, Du Bois pleased his hosts by publicly calling for Africa to follow “China’s leadership and recognize her grasp of the colour line” while urging China in turn “to recognize that it is “coloured and knows (to) what a coloured skin in this modern world subjects its owner”. Some of the couple’s works were translated into Chinese as “lasting gifts” to commemorate their stay (see Gao, ‘W. E. B. and Shirley Graham Du Bois in Maoist China’, 67–69).

coalition, with cultural exchanges at the core of the post-conference agenda, would inevitably have repercussions for translation protocols in the mid- to late 1950s. These effects, however, may be characterized as uneven and surprisingly delayed in some respects, as the leading literary figures/functionaries in the translation sector found themselves interpreting and developing the Party's cultural policies while still trying to pursue their own views and priorities.²⁹ One of the most pivotal of all such figures to the story of Black African literature in China is Mao Dun, who, despite his left-wing sympathies and promotion of the translation of oppressed people's literatures in the 1920s, had not expressed much overt interest in the flowering of Black literary activity during that era (see chapter two). He would emerge again in the 1950s, this time at the nexus of political and cultural authority under the new regime, in a number of roles that would have a bearing on the future of African literature: as minister of culture overseeing the reorganization of the translation sector and as chief editor of the pre-eminent translation journal *Yiwen*. Through an exploration of pronouncements by him (or sanctioned by his authority) and activities that emanated from these roles through the 1950s, I show how the literary establishment continued to neglect or overlook Black African literatures even as it began to embrace other Third World writings until the eve of the Tashkent

²⁹ As Yangsheng Guo records, "well-known translator-turned writers and theorists were assigned to important posts". Besides Mao Dun, there was Deputy Minister of Culture Zheng Zhenduo, and Director of the Academia Sinica Guo Moruo (see Guo, 'The Politics of Translation under Chairman Mao's Leadership', 48–49). Mao and Zheng had been at the helm of *Xiaoshuo yuebao* (mentioned in chapter two) in the 1920s, the publication that had introduced the Chinese reading public to works from lesser-known 'small and weak' European countries in particular.

conference, by which time such omissions were too glaring to countenance. In this respect, I differ from Paola Iovene and Nicolai Volland, both of whom have made invaluable recent contributions to scholarship concerning *Yiwen*; they have little to say about Black African works and tend to treat their handling by the journal as largely indistinguishable from that of other Third World literatures. While I draw on their works extensively, I will also rely more heavily on my own analysis of policy changes communicated through periodic summaries of reader feedback or special announcements than they do. Rather than attempting to assign ‘blame’ to an individual whose biases and direct involvement in translation projects remain opaque, I propose to read Mao Dun as an emblem of a powerful yet constrained elite, straddling the literary and political domains, whose interests and values had been shaped in a bygone era and who may have found it difficult to adapt to an altered political context as China began to oppose the Soviet Union while asserting its own claims to leadership of the Third World with Africa prominent in its calculations.

In the early 1950s, Mao Dun was tasked with leading efforts to centralize control of the translation sector in order to reduce what had been perceived as the chaos in the sector of the first few years after 1949 and to “harness all translators and their energy toward serving the dominant ideology of Mao

Zedong Thought and the stated socioeconomic goals of the Communist Party”.³⁰

Qi adds that the “first ever National Translation Work meeting” was convened in late 1951 with the “stated aim” of better organizing and planning translation activities “nationwide” but that the presentations at the meeting revealed a strong ideological orientation. The agenda of this meeting was promoted at a follow-up conference in 1954, convened by the Chinese Writers’ Association, at which Mao Dun and other prominent literati/functionaries would seek to “establish a centralized system to plan, organize, and regulate all literary translation to avoid redundancy and to improve quality”, as well as reach a technical “consensus concerning the criteria of good translation and the methods of translation”. Many of the delegates at the conference had been at the forefront of Chinese literary and cultural life since the May Fourth era and, while ostensibly committed to the Party line, tried to “strike a balance between content (politics) and form (art) instead of letting the former completely supersede or overrule the latter”.³¹

For the purposes of the present discussion, Mao Dun’s comments to the gathering on *what* should be translated are most salient. Lamenting that private publishers had flooded the market with “unimportant or harmful” works and

³⁰ Qi, *Western Literature in China and the Translation of a Nation*, 119.

³¹ Qi, 121. Indeed, as Iovene points out, the conference was “partly an attempt to preserve a relative autonomy for the work of literary translators” (see Iovene, *Tales of Futures Past*, 52).

neglected such masterpieces as the Homeric epics from the West or the classics of India, Japan, and even Russia, he argued that “translating the literary gems of the past would reveal a history of cultural exchanges in which China was embedded from early on as one of the world’s oldest civilizations, while the classics of nineteenth-century realism would introduce readers to the giants of modern world literature”.³² While Mao Dun endorsed efforts to translate contemporary Euro-American literature, Iovene states that he was concerned about the difficulty of discerning “the good from the bad”; his reference to the overtly socialist Louis Aragon of France as an acceptable example suggests that, in principle, only a narrow range of writings were considered “progressive” and therefore acceptable.³³ Instead, modern works were primarily to be obtained from “the more advanced socialist countries” (the Soviet Union in particular) and to be “appreciated more as political and ideological textbooks than mere literature” in the hopes of familiarizing Chinese readers with the lives, struggles and socialist values of these states.³⁴ Turning to “the revolutionary and progressive literary works in all the capitalist, colonised and semi-colonised countries”, Mao Dun (according to Guo’s translation) located the peoples of these territories, who were “struggling...against imperialist aggression and slavery” in China’s “yesterday” or past, thereby setting up a teleological hierarchy in which Chinese readers could, through reading these works, ‘look

³² Iovene, *Tales of Futures Past*, 55–56.

³³ See chapter three for a fuller discussion on the ‘progressive’ category of works.

³⁴ Guo, ‘The Politics of Translation under Chairman Mao’s Leadership’, 50.

back' on the type of "miserable and painful" lives from which socialism had recently freed them and feel "profound sympathy" for those yet to be liberated. Having accomplished a socialist revolution already, Mao Dun's audience were also reminded of what set them apart from these peoples, perhaps unwittingly propagating a notion that would later bolster the CCP's claim to leadership of the 'non-white' world. He then linked the "current struggle for independence and freedom" with an imagined global struggle for peace and against (imperialist and colonial) aggression of which the Chinese people were also a part. Thus, where the classics were characterized as "infinitely rich in contents" and as "indispensable spiritual food for our national cultural life" and socialist literatures were lauded for their instructive and spiritual value, the third category of works, that encompassed all Black literatures, was valued only to the extent that it could testify to the horrors of imperialism and colonialism. This is strongly reminiscent of the numerous examples of what I termed Black literature's narrow testimonial function in the previous chapter. While the translation activities discussed in that context were largely at the margins of the literary scene, I contend that Mao Dun's statements confirm that this restrictive criterion emanated from the heart of the literary establishment.³⁵

³⁵ Mao Dun had expressed similar ideas in his foreword to the debut issue of the journal *Yiwen* in July 1953. Foreshadowing his remarks at the conference the following year, he asserted that, through reading the works of "capitalist as well as colonised and semi-colonised countries", the "brave" and "resolute" struggle for "peace and democracy" of the peoples in these places could be "vividly seen" by Chinese readers ('也要求从文艺作品上更真切地看到资本主义国家的和殖民地半殖民地的人民如何勇敢而鉴定地为和平为民主而斗争') (see Mao, 'Fakan ci' [Foreword], 2).

According to Volland, the founding of the translation journal *Yiwen* was a major step towards centralizing the “function of introducing and disseminating foreign literature that had hitherto appeared in a wide range of sources”.³⁶ The journal, along with “state publishing houses and joint public-private publishing companies” would be assigned particular tasks in accordance with “nationwide translation plans” to remedy the “the malpractice of hasty translations”.³⁷ I add to this that the journal could also be used to buttress specific policy positions through tools such as reader surveys: every one of the concerns raised in Mao Dun’s August 1954 speech had purportedly been mentioned by readers, according to a report entitled ‘Readers’ opinions and this journal’s future plans’ in the March issue of that year.³⁸ The report was issued in the name of the editorial staff and presented *Yiwen*’s focus on modern Soviet literature and the classics in its first few issues as having been enthusiastically received by readers, thereby justifying the even greater subsequent emphasis on these categories until 1956. It is possible that reader feedback may also have enabled the evolution of editorial policy but this remains difficult to verify.

³⁶ Volland, *Socialist Cosmopolitanism*, 154.

³⁷ Iovene, *Tales of Futures Past*, 56.

³⁸ An example of this was the claim that, of all the works previously published by the journal, modern Soviet literature was most favoured by readers (‘我们所发表的作品重，最受读者欢迎是现代苏联的作品...’) (see Editorial department, ‘Duzhe yijian he benkan jinhoude jihua’ [Readers’ opinions and this journal’s future plans], 207).

Nevertheless, as Iovene points out, Mao Dun also stressed the role of editors as “arbiters of style” and the “ultimate guarantors” of the quality of translations; this suggests that he viewed his own role as editor-in-chief at *Yiwen* in a similar light, especially given that his vision for the journal accorded with his broader objectives as minister of culture.³⁹ Whatever their origin, his proposals appear overwhelmingly to have been implemented in *Yiwen*’s early years (1953–1956). Besides Soviet works, those from other Eastern European countries were also promoted in the journal.⁴⁰ As noted elsewhere in reference to the translation scene of this period in general, Euro-American works continued to be translated for *Yiwen*; non-European literatures were also included, with a significant representation of Asian texts (from countries such as Japan, India, Vietnam and North Korea) and occasional selections from Latin America, commencing with a special section featuring works from several countries in the October 1953 issue.⁴¹ As Volland points out, however, African literature only received sustained attention in *Yiwen* from late 1958 onwards.⁴²

³⁹ Iovene, *Tales of Futures Past*, 56–57. That Mao Dun had “resigned from his position as editor in chief of *People’s Literature*, hitherto the nation’s flagship journal” in order to take up the new role at *Yiwen* also signalled “the pre-eminent status assigned to translated literature” and the “importance the CCP leadership attached to the new journal” (see Volland, *Socialist Cosmopolitanism*, 154–57). As Volland later notes, Chen Bingyi, the deputy-editor of the journal, insisted that Mao Dun “was deeply involved with the minutiae of *Yiwen*’s founding” as well as “in the later editorial process”, while others took a “more sanguine view of his role” (see Volland, 236).

⁴⁰ Iovene, *Tales of Futures Past*, 57.

⁴¹ It is possible that the coverage of Latin American literature had been spurred by the visits of Brazilian writer and International Stalin Peace Prize winner Jorge Amado and Cuban poet Nicolás Guillén the year before. Siwei Wang suggests that “literary translation” emerged as “a significant form of diplomatic strategy for the PRC government to reach out to Brazil”. Wang also notes that “whenever a Latin American writer visited China, there would be introduction or translation of his or her works” (see Wang, ‘Transcontinental Revolutionary Imagination’, 73–81). The handling of Brazilian literature may thus have anticipated later strategies with regard to African literature. I will return to the importance of writer visits in chapter five.

⁴² Volland, *Socialist Cosmopolitanism*, 178.

Besides the translation of *The Path of Thunder* discussed in the previous chapter, the only other translation of a text from a Black African country published during this early period was the rendering of three poems from the Guinean performer, writer and politician Fodéba Keïta's French-language *Poèmes africains* (1950), which appeared in the May 1954 edition of *Yiwen*. The situation would persist until October 1957 when the extract from Peter Abrahams's *Tell Freedom* was published (see chapter three). As with Abrahams, almost no information was provided about Keïta; his name and provenance were omitted from the contents section, along with the individual names of each poem. The three pieces were placed towards the middle of the journal with an afterword by translator Jia Zhi in the final pages. After acknowledging Keïta only as the translator of the works and drawing heavily on the French editor Pierre Seghers' note on their technical aspects in the original publication, Jia launched into a familiar denunciation of imperialism (in a manner also reminiscent of the paratexts to the Black American works mentioned in the previous chapter). Jia asserted that these "folk lyrics" bear witness to "the invasion of Africa by imperialism [with its] use of oppressive force and petty corruption" as well as "how the atrocities committed by the invaders in colonial territories create misery and distress for the good-hearted people".⁴³ He emphasized the "heroism" of the African people's armed

⁴³ Jia, 'Feizhou de shisan shou', 213–14. cf. 从这些民间诗歌里我们可以看到帝国主义对于非洲人民的侵略——武力镇压与小恩小惠的收买；看到侵略者在殖民地的暴行如何造成善良人民的悲惨和不幸...

resistance to these invaders and mentioned their “extreme anger” at the “savagery” inflicted on them, thereby contradicting earlier views of African passivity in the face of European oppression.⁴⁴ He also praised their “labour production”, “great love of peace”, and their “wonderful ideals” as well as the “natural scenery” of Africa.⁴⁵ While Jia offered a brief yet sympathetic view of the ‘African people’, the impulse towards establishing a shared Sino-African history as a basis for further engagement that emerged in the media coverage during the Bandung Conference a year later is not in evidence here; he also did not provide any direct commentary on racism. The tendency to universalize the African experience is, however, already detectable here: Jia generalized the suffering inflicted by French colonial figures on the Mandinka characters in the narratives of the poems to include all Africans and their collective fate under imperialism.

The unevenness of this handling of works from the non-white world is all the more striking when it appears that not even the contingent Afro-Asian coalition initiated at Bandung (with its emphasis on cultural exchanges) prompted the cultural mediators at *Yiwen* to include an African text in the April or May issues of 1955, despite the new focus on Africa in the state media mentioned in the last

⁴⁴ Jia, 213–14. cf. 也看到非洲人民武装反抗侵略者的英勇和对侵略者暴行的极端的愤怒...

⁴⁵ Jia, 213–14. cf. 看到他们多么赞美劳动生产和自然景物，多么热爱和平，并且有着多么美好的理想...

section. While Volland suggests that the journal “became tied to the rhythms of political and cultural life in socialist world” as it “matured” and cites the inclusion of works from three of the countries (India, Indonesia and Burma) that organized the conference in the April issue as evidence of this, I suggest that the coverage seems underwhelming.⁴⁶ Indeed, I contend that the editors at *Yiwen* would only demonstrate that they could be sensitive to the suppression of left-wing or anti-colonial writers in Africa over a year later by publishing Algerian writer Mohamed Dib’s short stories and profile in July 1956 in response to the attempted suppression and criticism of his work in France. According to Volland, the journal also responded rapidly to the Suez crisis in December 1956, adding a sixteen-page extra with proclamations of support for the Egyptian people and “condemnation of allied intervention”. The following month, seventy-five pages of Egyptian literature from a variety of genres were included. This type of handling is consistent with the role of *Yiwen* as part of a propaganda apparatus that focused on “the reorientation of the nation’s global outlook” and “of its place vis-à-vis neighbours and enemies, allies and adversaries” through massive campaigns across all media formats.⁴⁷ It is possible to speculate that the Egyptian and Algerian examples may also represent a possible repercussion, in the literary sphere, of diplomatic or cultural initiatives at Bandung. Moreover, the inclusion of Egyptian works in *Yiwen* was

⁴⁶ Volland, *Socialist Cosmopolitanism*, 164–65. The Asian works also only appeared after a number of selections from the Soviet Union, Hungary and Romania.

⁴⁷ Volland, 154.

followed by the separate publication of a book of Egyptian short stories by Writers Press in July 1957; this may have anticipated the protocols employed by the same entity in subsequent years when it would produce book-length translations and anthologies of various African works, often after they had first appeared in *Yiwen*. Similarly, translations of several of Dib's works were released by other houses from 1958 onwards. Overall, however, it would appear that the tentative outreach to *Black* African countries at Bandung was not immediately regarded as significant in the cultural sphere.⁴⁸

While direct reasons for the lack of attention to Black African writing remain opaque, I argue that the literary and cultural tradition to which most of the most powerful cultural mediators of the era belonged must be considered in attempting to uncover some of the factors at play. Building on the previous section, it is likely that this tradition continued to interact with the racialized world view at the heart of modern Chinese identity in complex ways. As noted in chapter two, the May Fourth era was characterized by a desire to emulate Western or Russian/Soviet literary modernity against the backdrop of the racialization of scientific and educational discourses; while figures such as Lu

⁴⁸ While it may be argued that Egypt and Algeria are African countries, it seems likely that they were figured primarily as part of the Arab world in the Chinese imaginary. Works from both countries were promoted relatively frequently in *Yiwen* between 1956 and 1958 and were often listed under Arab literature. On the first occasion on which they shared a contents page with Black African works in the September 1958 issue, they were listed under a section entitled 'Selections of modern Arab poetry' while the latter were listed under 'Selections from modern African poetry'.

Xun, Mao Dun and Zhou Zuoren had also taken a keen interest in the translation of the literatures of ‘oppressed peoples’, I showed that the Black literary modernism (as expressed in outpourings of creativity such as the Harlem Renaissance) was largely ignored by them. In light of this, the positioning of the new journal seems significant in that *Yiwen*, as Volland explains (citing Mao Dun’s foreword to the first issue), was named after a short-lived but influential publication founded by Lu Xun in the 1930s that had been committed to promoting the “Soviet Union as a model for writing in China by introducing the theory and practice of socialist realism” to Chinese readers.⁴⁹ Placing the journal “at the very pinnacle of a cosmopolitan tradition in Chinese culture since the May Fourth era” established it as an “authoritative voice” in the cultural sphere of the 1950s. Iovene also foregrounds this tradition, suggesting Mao Dun’s overall plan for the translation sector “resumed the cosmopolitan editorial vision of his early years as editor” at *Xiaoshuo yuebao* (see chapter two).⁵⁰ Similarly, Siwei Wang claims that Mao Dun’s 1954 speech “evoked the spirit” of the May Fourth writers’ translation of oppressed people’s literatures decades before.⁵¹ While Mao Dun outlined a much broader geographical field for translators and readers in the PRC than the relatively narrow focus of his interests in earlier decades, the degree of *continuity* that these scholars discern

⁴⁹ Volland, *Socialist Cosmopolitanism*, 156–58. While Mao Dun was at pains to point out the differences in political context between the two eras, the emphasis on Soviet literature and the revival of the title are suggestive of a degree of continuity. Volland adds elsewhere that “the continuity with the 1930s *Yiwen* is stressed by all those involved with” its founding (see Volland, 235).

⁵⁰ Iovene, *Tales of Futures Past*, 56.

⁵¹ Wang, ‘Transcontinental Revolutionary Imagination’, 81.

may have meant that the attitudes and practices that had seemingly precluded much interest in Black literary activity in the earlier era may have continued to suppress the translation of Black African works in the early to mid-1950s. This claim has to be qualified, however, by adding that, although I was referring primarily to the translation of Black American works in the 1920s in chapter two, Black literature could be treated somewhat monolithically, as revealed in Zhao Jingshen's profile of 'African' literature that featured African American writers. Moreover, as shown in the last chapter, while certain works of Black American literature were translated during the early 1950s, these were few in number and mainly shorter texts such as poems. *Yiwen* itself published very little Black American literature prior to 1956, the exception being Langston Hughes's short story 'One Friday Morning' which was published in June 1954, the month after Fodéba Keïta's poems appeared.

Between 1956 and early 1958, neither Africa nor Bandung's 'Afro-Asian' cultural agenda would receive much coverage in *Yiwen*. Instead, while Soviet, East European and 'acceptable' Euro-American literature continued to be emphasized, the journal's longstanding Asian component became larger and more diverse. Iovene identifies 1957 as the year in which structural changes were enacted in *Yiwen* that would facilitate an attempt to "configure an Asian

literary community” based on “cultural commonality rooted in an Asian past”.⁵² From 1957 onwards, “*Yiwen* published less and less recent Soviet fiction, shifting to earlier Russian works and considerably broadening its geographical focus”. Iovene ascribes these changes to a deterioration in relations with the Soviet Union that began in 1956, rather than to important developments in the ‘Afro-Asian’ world (on which I elaborate below).⁵³ In addition to greater numbers of Asian works themselves, *Yiwen* published more illustrations of Asian artworks; Mao Dun also penned the introduction for an entire issue devoted to the literatures of Asia in August 1957. Rather than presenting the special issue as having any connection to developments at or since Bandung, Mao Dun focused on “the extensive relations” that China had maintained “with its Asian neighbours for more than a thousand years”, mentioned that “systematic efforts to make the cultural heritage and contemporary literatures of the various Asian nations to the Chinese reading public” had only been made since “the founding of the PRC”, and stressed *Yiwen*’s present and future role in these efforts.⁵⁴

⁵² Iovene, *Tales of Futures Past*, 60.

⁵³ Iovene notes that Mao differed with Nikita Khrushchev on issues such as the latter’s denouncement of Stalin’s rule and “the handling of the Hungarian and Polish crises” in 1956. While Mao continued to “endorse the Soviet Union as the leader of the socialist world” publicly, he began suggesting that “the leadership was shifting to China”. By 1959, issues such as “tensions between China and India following the rebellion in Tibet” and “Soviet–US rapprochement” further soured relations, leading to Khrushchev’s recall of all Soviet experts and reduced aid in July 1960. These actions were then used by Mao to “deflect blame” from his government for the disasters of the Great Leap Forward. The alliance between the two states formally ended in 1964 (see Iovene, *Tales of Futures Past*, 58–59).

⁵⁴ Volland, *Socialist Cosmopolitanism*, 179. I discovered that Mao Dun had also attended and spoken at the Asian Writers Congress in New Delhi in December 1956. The February 1957 issue reported on this event; the discourses of pan-Asian unity expressed during this event appear to have had far more in common with the

While I broadly agree with Iovene's periodization, I suggest that another post-survey summary of readers' opinions may have signalled the future shift towards greater coverage of this region in the April 1956 issue, in which readers had reportedly requested a more diverse representation of "eastern" literature as well as more images from Asia; while these readers had also apparently expressed an interest in "progressive" works from "capitalist", "colonised and semi-colonised countries" (especially those with "vigorous national movements"), the echoing of the language of Mao Dun's 1953/54 vague characterization of this grouping perhaps suggests that this reference was little more than rhetorical or aspirational.⁵⁵ Although the translation record for this period seems to bear this out as already indicated, the journal did subsequently publish a tiny number of brief news items related to Black African literature (and Black American literature) in its regular column "World Literature and Art" which, as Volland notes, reported on "writer's congresses abroad, new publications, birthdays, anniversaries, deaths, and other news".⁵⁶

positions articulated at Bandung than Mao Dun's above-mentioned introduction but this falls beyond the scope of the present discussion.

⁵⁵ Editorial department, 'Benkan duzhe yijian zongshu' [Summary of this journal's readers' opinions], 194. cf. 许多国家，特别是东方各国的文学，介绍得太少... '译文' 对亚洲国家的介绍在篇幅上少一些...多介绍一些资本主义的进步文学作品和殖民地，半殖民地国家的作品，特别是一些民族运动蓬勃开展的国家的作品。

⁵⁶ Volland, *Socialist Cosmopolitanism*, 163.

Just as the above-mentioned special issue devoted to Asia may have represented the climax of *Yiwen*'s pan-Asian project more than a year after the summary appeared, I suggest that another review of this sort in the May 1957 may have anticipated Black African literature's eventual breakthrough in late 1958 in a similarly delayed manner.⁵⁷ It mentioned that the journal's readers felt that *Yiwen* had not introduced enough "eastern" or "Afro-Asian" works and that this situation had to be decisively addressed; the phrase 'Afro-Asian' had seemingly never been used in editorial communications in the journal published prior to this and also seems to be a departure from Mao Dun's previous formulations.⁵⁸ That this reference may have signalled a coming change as early as 1957 is supported by the subsequent publication of the Abrahams extract in October of that year as well as the first-ever promotional book summary for an African novel (the French edition of *Le vieux nègre et la médaille* by Cameroonian author Ferdinand Oyono) in the combined November/December 1957 issue.⁵⁹ News about, and works by, African Americans may have been thought to be the most accessible way to begin to shore up the coverage of Black Africa; the inclusion of a number of Black American artist Charles White's powerful paintings of Black people, in the same issue in which Abraham's extract

⁵⁷ While Asian literature would continue to be included in *Yiwen* and its successor publication *Shijie wenxue*, Iovene states that the "short-lived" effort to "revive pan-Asianism" foundered due to tensions between China and India in 1959 (see Iovene, *Tales of Futures Past*, 60).

⁵⁸ Editorial department, 'Benkan duzhe yijian zongshu' [Summary of this journal's readers' opinions'], May 1957, 197. cf. 他们提出了“译文”所没有介绍过或者介绍的还不够的许多国际。读者特别关心东方、亚非国家的文学，他们觉得“译文”在这方面介绍得还很不够，需要大大加强。

⁵⁹ Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe ('China Youth Press') would publish the Chinese translation in October 1959 under the name *Lao heiren he jiangzhang* 《老黑人和奖章》 ('The old Black man and the medal').

appeared, seems to epitomize this. Moreover, in the April 1957 issue, a month prior to the publication of the summary, the conjunction of Black American writer Arna Bontemps's short story 'A Summer Tragedy' and a news item on an extraordinary undated meeting of South African writers opposed to Apartheid at the University of the Witwatersrand may also be significant in this regard. It is also worth recalling that the extract from Abrahams's *Tell Freedom* and another South African story called 'Cow' were published together with American Albert Maltz's 'Without Laughter' in 1959 (see chapter three). Such juxtapositions also perhaps hint at a lack of available Black African works in China, a point raised by Mao Dun in relation to Asian materials.⁶⁰ I elaborate on one more notable example of such a juxtaposition below.

Despite these subtle shifts and its expressions of solidarity with the peoples of countries such as Algeria and Egypt, however, the journal seems to have remained mostly out of step with China's growing involvement with the anti-colonial/decolonising movements and nations in both Asia and Africa. As in the earlier case of Bandung, this is illustrated in its lack of attention to an event that would have a direct bearing on its future a few months later: the inaugural meeting of the Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organization in Cairo (AAPSO) in late December 1957 "with over five hundred delegates from forty-eight

⁶⁰ See Mao, 'Qianyan' [Foreword], 3–4.

different nations in attendance”, representing the “single largest meeting of Africa-Asia” since Bandung.⁶¹ With regard to *Yiwen*, the AAPSO’s establishment of the Afro-Asian Writers’ Bureau (AAWB) as its “cultural wing” is most significant as it emphasized “Third World translation and cultural exchanges” as central to the enactment of the transnational cultural agenda first articulated at Bandung; such exchanges were seen as a means of transcending both “Cold War divisions” and “the dichotomy of coloniser and colonised”.⁶²

In the aftermath of this meeting, coverage continued largely as usual and there was little to suggest that the journal would be transformed within a year. However, in the April 1958 issue, a brief news item appeared that mentioned that the proposal by the Soviet delegation that an Afro-Asian writers’ conference be convened in Tashkent (the capital of Uzbekistan) had been enthusiastically received at both the Asian Writers’ Conference in New Delhi in December 1956 and the Cairo meeting.⁶³ It added that the Soviet Writers’ Association had established a preparations committee that would work until two months before the event when all responsibilities would be handed over to an

⁶¹ Yoon, ‘Cold War Africa and China’, 15–19.

⁶² However, while the AAPSO was united in its “refutation of colonialism on both economic and cultural levels” in 1957, the growing rift between the Chinese and the Soviets, who played a more active role in the organization than they had at Bandung, would ultimately “reveal its ideological fissures” and eventually force “leftist-leaning African politicians, writers and intellectuals” in particular to have to “negotiate this difficult terrain of Cold War realpolitik” (see Yoon, 19–20).

⁶³ See footnote 54. The New Delhi meeting had previously been reported on but no such proposal had been mentioned.

international preparations committee to be organized by the “Afro-Asian Writers’ Representative Organization”, a possible first reference to the AAWB.⁶⁴ Another news item was included in the July issue, noting that a preparatory meeting had been held in Moscow in June which had been attended by representatives of the Soviet Union, India, China, Japan, and the ‘United Arab Republic’ (Egypt and Syria); the dates and agenda of the Tashkent meeting were agreed upon and invitations to participate in the preparations committee would be sent to representatives of writer organizations in a number of countries, including Cameroon, Ghana, Nigeria and South Africa.⁶⁵ An editor’s note also announced that *Yiwen* would focus on introducing works by Afro-Asian writers from August onwards and would publish a special issue devoted to Afro-Asian literature in September in anticipation of the Tashkent conference; it called for the “support” of readers and “foreign literature workers” across the country as well as for “lots” of drafts of translations of relevant works to be sent as soon as possible.⁶⁶ In perhaps the most striking

⁶⁴ Notice entitled ‘Sulian jiji choubel yafei guojia zuojia dahui’ [The Soviet Union makes active preparations for the Afro-Asian Writers’ Conference], 193–94. cf. 1956 年 12 月在印度德里举行的亚洲作家会议，以及后来在开罗举行的亚洲国家人民团结大会 (sic.)，都热烈地支持苏联代表团提出的在塔什干召开亚非国家作家大会的建议。苏联作家协会理事会书记处已经组成了亚非作家大会筹备委员会，进行筹备工作。这个委员会的工作只做到大会召开前两个月为止，以后将移交给由亚非国家作家代表组织的国际筹备委员会去进行。

⁶⁵ Notice entitled ‘Yafei guojia zuojia dahui juxing choubel huiyi’ [The Afro-Asian Writers’ Conference [organizers] hold a preparatory meeting], 164. cf. 今年 6 月 2 日至 4 日在莫斯科举行了亚非国家作家大会筹备会议，出席的有印度、中国、阿拉伯联合共和国、苏联和日本的代表。会议一致同意关于召开大会的决议，大会定于 1958 年 10 月 1 日至 5 日举行，预定的议事日程中包括...筹备会议拟请下列各国的作家派代表参加筹备委员会：...加纳、...喀麦隆、...尼日利亚、...南非联邦...

⁶⁶ ‘Bianzhede hua’ [A note from the editor], 174. cf. 为了迎接今年十月在苏联塔什干召开的亚非国家作家会议，《译文》准备从八月号起开始比较集中地介绍一些亚非国家的文学作品...希望全国各地外国文学工作者和读者在这方面支援我们，在最近期间多多投递这方面的译稿。

deployment of a Black American figure to bolster the coverage of works by Black writers, a translation of the entire first chapter of Paul Robeson's book *Here I stand* was included (including his listing and endorsement of the "Ten Principles of Bandung") together with a photograph of him and two further news items about him; this unprecedented attention to a Black artist/writer seems to have foreshadowed the later handling of Black African writers.⁶⁷

Robeson enjoyed a considerable reputation in China (as noted in the previous chapter) and his image and works could therefore be deployed to endorse the overt shift towards the Afro-Asian world that was about to be enacted.

Nevertheless, the journal's hitherto abysmal translation record as far as African works were concerned as well as the July issue's urgent appeal for translations and its extraordinary handling of Robeson are also suggestive of the possibility that *Yiwen* was ill prepared for this abrupt shift — an inference which will be further substantiated in the next chapter.⁶⁸

That this shift in emphasis would be permanent was indicated by the announcement in the December 1958 issue that the journal would be changing its name from *Yiwen* to *Shijie wenxue* ('World literature') "in tune with the new

⁶⁷ See Robeson, *Here I Stand*, 28–47.

⁶⁸ The back cover of the April 1958 issue lists the only translation of an 'African' novel besides *The Path of Thunder* by this date: Olive Schreiner's *Story of an African Farm* (*Yige Feizhou zhuangyuande gushi*). Astonishingly, although Schreiner was not unknown to the Chinese literary world (see chapter two), the novel's country of origin is listed simply as "Africa".

situation at home and abroad and its requirements”; Volland situates this event in the aftermath of the Tashkent conference and links it directly to the “rising prominence of the Third World nations” that “had changed the logic of the political geography”.⁶⁹ The changes must also be seen against the backdrop of the fraying Sino-Soviet relationship as the new name also broke with the Soviet-oriented legacy of the previous title, representing an end to Mao Dun’s initial vision for the publication; instead, the journal’s aim was “redefined as ‘introducing works that reflect the real lives and revolutionary struggles of the people of all countries of the modern world’”.⁷⁰ Iovene suggests that “the shift of emphasis from Russian toward Latin American, Asian, and African writers had already been underway” by then. Chinese translators now took on greater responsibility for not only the translated excerpts themselves (which became shorter) but for critical comments, essays and summaries in which they were to guide readers more actively towards the ‘correct’ understanding of foreign texts. From January 1959 onwards, the journal also ‘toned down’ the “voice of Soviet critics and the Soviet Union in general”.⁷¹ According to Volland, the “waning of the Soviet Union’s pre-eminence” politically diminished the authority that endorsements of foreign literary works by their critics had once carried.⁷²

⁶⁹ Volland, *Socialist Cosmopolitanism*, 165.

⁷⁰ Iovene, *Tales of Futures Past*, 68.

⁷¹ Volland, *Socialist Cosmopolitanism*, 165.

⁷² Volland, 185.

Although the growing schism with the Soviet Union was not public as yet, intellectuals who had expressed pro-Soviet sentiments such as Mao Dun found themselves in somewhat complex positions. That Mao Dun stepped down as chief editor of *Yiwen* amid a revamp of the editorial board in the closing months of 1958 and prior to the name change may indicate the need for a decisive break with his Soviet-oriented blueprint for the journal.⁷³ Volland concurs that the changes were intended to move the journal away from “its earlier strong tilt toward Russian and Soviet literature” and suggests that “the change of guard at *Yiwen*...foreshadowed the Sino-Soviet break...eighteen months later”. Nevertheless, Mao Dun appears to have adjusted rapidly to the shifting political currents, placing himself at the vanguard of the changes.⁷⁴ In the lead-up to the Tashkent conference in October 1958, he incorporated Black Africa obliquely into his foreword to the special issue in which the literatures of the Third World were showcased by using the phrase ‘Afro-Asian’ for perhaps the first time in an editorial signed by him personally and by eulogizing the “historic struggle” engulfing African and other nations:

⁷³ Volland, 166.

⁷⁴ Other May Fourth veterans who attended the conference included Ba Jin (see chapter three) and Zhou Yang, “vice-minister of culture and vice-director of the CCP’s Department of Propaganda”, who, as Duncan Yoon contends, made a speech which “demonstrated the lengths to which the PRC would go to uphold a foreign policy line of transnational solidarity” (see Yoon, ‘Cold War Africa and China’, 25–26). While pan-Asian solidarity had been a recurrent theme among intellectuals since the turn of the century, whether any of these figures had publicly or privately endorsed solidarity with African countries or the translation of African literature prior to late 1958 requires further investigation. Given that, as Gamsa states, “Russian literature in particular” had been “a major source of inspiration” to May Fourth “translators and writers” as “they shaped the canon of modern Chinese literature”, the extent to which these new transnational formations were anti-Soviet must have been troubling to Mao Dun and others like him (see Gamsa, *The Reading of Russian Literature in China*, 4).

These are the voices of the struggling people! From Japan to Southwest Africa, from Indonesia to Iran, this surge of literature reflecting the fighting spirit and the confidence of the people has become the most vibrant, constantly developing mainstream of cultural life in these nations!⁷⁵

Here, the degree to which Third World literature in particular reflected an anti-colonial ‘fighting spirit’ is once again presented as its primary value. Mao Dun went on to discuss the literatures of the socialist “brother nations” that would be featured in the next issue, again situating the peoples of these countries and the Chinese themselves in the future of the Third World nations:

The unprecedented, great achievements of the one billion people in the socialist camp in building a beautiful new life are encouraging the struggles of the Asian and African peoples against colonialism and for peace...⁷⁶

As Pieter Vanhove notes, Mao Dun also “made a passionate plea for Afro-Asian solidarity and cultural cooperation” in his acclaimed speech at the Tashkent conference itself, arguing that “after centuries of oppression and exploitation... it was time for the formerly colonised nations represented...to reclaim their rightful spot in the history of World Literature”.⁷⁷ These views were not antithetical to what he had proposed for a number of years and his advocacy of the translation of Asian literatures was well known; what remained largely

⁷⁵ Volland, *Socialist Cosmopolitanism*, 179–80. All translations in this paragraph are Volland’s.

⁷⁶ Volland, 180.

⁷⁷ Vanhove, “‘A World to Win’”, 145. Indeed, as Yoon explains, Mao Dun’s speech at the conference was highly significant: it “represented the first time Maoist literary theory was promulgated on such a global scale” and “would provoke the national imaginations of many writers and intellectuals across the third world” (see Yoon, “‘Our Forces Have Redoubled’”, 242–43).

opaque were his views on Black African literature and its writers, especially insofar as the readers of *Yiwen/Shijie wenxue* were concerned. In his reflections on the conference in the January 1959 issue, while highlighting the historical significance of the event and vividly describing its setting, he had nothing to say about his interactions with the Afro-Asian delegates.⁷⁸

In conclusion, as implied in the introduction to this section, I contest Volland's claims that, despite such hindrances as finding "suitable works for translation", "a lack of background information on the authors", and the "pitfalls of Cold War cultural politics", *Yiwen*'s editors had made a "conscious effort" from the beginning to "include works and voices" from Latin America, Asia and Africa. Mao Dun made a similar claim at the second Afro-Asian Writers' Conference in Cairo in 1962:

Over *the past decade* we have translated and published over 400 works from more than twenty Asian and African countries.... Our Writers' Union has had the honour of welcoming many Asian and African writers during their visits to China. We have become ever closer spiritually to the peoples of Asia and Africa, and the unity and friendship between us and the peoples of Asia and Africa have been consolidated.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ For Mao Dun's reflections, see Mao, 'Chonggaode shiming he zhuangyande husheng' [A lofty mission and a solemn cry], 5–7.

⁷⁹ Vanhove, "A World to Win", 153. Italics are mine.

While Volland's account of some of the obstacles to translating works from these countries is accurate, and Asian and Latin American literatures were indeed translated prior to late 1958, the translation record indicates that Black African literatures were overlooked, ignored or neglected until it became expedient to begin translating them — during the months before the Tashkent conference. The Soviet-oriented approach of cultural mediators such as Mao Dun and their immersion in a longstanding literary tradition that had never engaged meaningfully with Black literatures, as well as their seeming failure to grasp the full significance of the Bandung moment in 1955, meant that Black African works were marginalized for much of the era in which other Third World literatures were gaining greater exposure among Chinese readers.

Chapter 5

In praise of “the *real* Black Africa”: Presenting African literature to Chinese readers during and after the Afro-Asian Writers’ Conference in Tashkent (1958–1965)

5.1 ‘Something old, something new’ in the Tashkent moment: The first paratextual constructions of Black Africa and its writers in *Yiwen*

While the incorporation of Black African poems and narratives in the September 1958 issue of *Yiwen* represents the first-ever attempt to showcase the literature of sub-Saharan Africa in Maoist China, the unevenness of the presentation of these works hints at both a lack of knowledge about African literature and the dearth of these works in China at the time. Chinese cultural mediators were forced to rely on Soviet publications and criticism at the very moment that they were supposed to be contesting Soviet influence both in China and in the Third World. Moreover, given the resilience of the racialized Chinese world view and the legacy of what I have termed the Black slave topos, how to legitimate the promotion of Black African works in the eyes of Chinese readers was an immediate challenge. Mao Dun’s foreword to the September 1958 issue of *Yiwen* partially addresses this issue by evoking a history of relations between China and the “important states of Afro-Asia” that went back at least a thousand years; he also insisted that this long history of cultural communication had “left

its imprint” on the “cultural development of both sides”, that it had “cultivated a deep friendship” in their “hearts” as well as that this communication had only recently been “obstructed by imperialism”.¹ Such generic discourses of friendship and unity with the ‘non-white’ world had been circulating in Chinese media coverage since the time of the Bandung Conference but did not go far enough.² Although longstanding discursive frameworks concerning Blackness and Africa were also no longer adequate, the abruptness of the irruption of African literature in *Yiwen*, just prior to the Afro-Asian Writers’ Conference in Tashkent, seems to have led paratext writers largely to rely on these frameworks. This section deals with the initial flurry of works that appeared in the September/October issues of the journal and highlights the persistence of some of these older discursive elements while noting subtle shifts in certain cases. A substantially different paratextual framing would only begin to emerge after the Tashkent Conference and could dramatically diverge with what had gone before, as I show in the next section, in the case of Senegalese writer/filmmaker Ousmane Sembène and his works.

¹ Mao, ‘Weile Yafei renmin de youyi he tuanjie’ [For the friendship and unity of the people of Afro-Asia], 3. cf. 一千多年前，我国和亚非的主要国家就有了频繁的文化交流...这些悠久的历史交流已经在彼此的文化发展中留下了印痕，已经在双方人民的心灵中培育了深厚的友谊...只在最近百年来，我们和亚非各国之间的文化交流受到了帝国主义的阻挠...

² Fennell, ‘Race’, 256–58

In his translation postscript to the first selection of African poetry to appear in *Yiwen*, Zhang Tiexian provided some background information regarding the post-war anti-colonial moment before ascribing the writing of poems “full of fighting spirit and optimism” to the “huge influence” of the rise of the African people’s liberation movements” on the “arts and literature of each nation”.³ This emphasis on revolutionary qualities is reminiscent of the handling of Black American poems in the 1920s and 1930s, except that these poets were no longer exceptions to a disunited, narcotized slave race whose homeland was irretrievably lost but rather the representatives of an “industrious” and “courageous” people, inhabiting a “vast land” containing “abundant natural resources”, who were mounting an offensive to recapture it.⁴ Zhang also affirmed the value of these works by describing them as diverse thematically while retaining distinctive “national characteristics” in terms of style. Yet, for Zhang, the inclusion of the poems could not be justified on these merits alone. In establishing their value, he claimed that each work benefited from the “absorption” of “world literature’s outstanding traditions”, seemingly alluding to Western literature.⁵ The impression of reliance on the West was deepened by

³ Zhang, ‘Yi houji’ [Translation afterword], 19. cf. 近年非洲民族解放运动的高涨, 给予各族人民的文学巨大的影响。...非洲的诗人们写出了充满战斗精神和乐观主义的诗歌。Biographical details on translator Zhang Tiexian (1913–1984) are scarce; see ‘Zhang Tiexian - huiyuan - Zhongguo zuojiawang’ [Zhang Tiexian - member - China Writers’ Association Website], <https://www.chinawriter.com.cn/n1/2016/0627/c404953-28496975.html>.

⁴ Zhang, 19. cf. 在这个广阔的土地上蕴藏着丰富的自然资源, 居住着勤劳、勇敢的非洲人民。

⁵ Zhang, 19. cf. 这些作品的题材很广泛, 在风格方面除保存了民族特点之外, 也吸收了世界文学的优秀传统。目前由于非洲许多民族还没有创立自己的文字, 所以诗人们不得不用欧洲文字 (如法文、葡文等) 来写作。

his subsequent remark that all the poems “could not but be” written in European languages such as French and Portuguese since “many African nations had not yet constructed their own writing systems”. Here, Zhang, perhaps unwittingly, risked diminishing the creative achievements of these African poets in the eyes of Chinese readers by exaggerating the poets’ indebtedness to the language and literature of the colonial metropole and failing to acknowledge the rich oral, musical and performance traditions of Africa (and perhaps the Black diaspora) that profoundly influenced their poetry. The impression created is of a poetry entirely mediated by its relation with the colonial powers: its form is determined by the linguistic and literary heritage of the oppressor while any content of value is constituted by the expression of anticolonial sentiments.

Due to a possible lack of information in some instances, Zhang included very brief profiles of each poet, primarily stressing their anticolonial tendencies and the ways in which their lives and works reflect broader African realities under colonialism as a means of further buttressing their credentials for selection. Mozambican poet and revolutionary Marcelino dos Santos (writing under the penname Lilinho Micaia) was described merely as a “young poet” whose works “adequately depict the miserable lives of African people”.⁶ Another Mozambican, Rui de Noronha, was termed a “famous poet” whose works were

⁶ Zhang, 19. cf. 里利尼尤·米凯亚是青年诗人...充分地反映了非洲人民的痛苦生活...

“brimming with a defiant spirit”.⁷ Bernard Dadié’s country of origin (Ivory Coast) was not mentioned in his profile; instead, his humble origins in a “poor farming family” as well as his status as a “well-known cultural activist” were noted.⁸ David Diop (Senegal) received the most attention from Zhang; he offered a number of biographical details about Diop and praised him as among the most talented of the young African poets.⁹ He added that Diop “is good at writing incisive political poems” and that readers “can see his powerful will to revolt against national oppression” in his works. In two cases, Zhang seems also to have alluded to the socialist realist preference for works that are imagined as deriving directly from the lives of ‘the people’. Condetto Nénékhaly-Camara (French Guinea) was said to have drawn on the “rhythm” of “folk dances” while Flavien Ranaivo (Madagascar), as a “folk literature researcher”, was “good at” conveying (folk) “life sentiments”.¹⁰ The fact that works by only two of these poets (Diop and Santos) would feature prominently again over the next few years suggests that the initial selection process was governed largely by what was available and may have been somewhat haphazard.¹¹

⁷ Zhang, 19. cf. 路易·德·诺罗尼亚是莫三鼻给著名诗人，他的作品充满着反抗精神。

⁸ Zhang, 19. cf. 伯纳尔·布阿·达吉耶出身于贫苦的农民家庭...是著名的非洲文化活动的家...

⁹ Zhang, 19. cf. 大卫·狄奥普...成为非洲富有才华的青年诗人之一...他擅长写尖锐的政治诗...从他的作品里，我们可以看到他反抗民族压迫的坚强意志。

¹⁰ Zhang, 19. cf. 聂涅·克哈里是非洲青年诗人...他在作品中运用了民间舞蹈的韵律...弗拉文·兰纳依沃是马达加斯加诗人兼民间文学研究者，他擅长写作短诗，富于生活情调。

¹¹ Another poem by Ranaivo would be featured in the April 1959 issue of *Shijie wenxue* while Nénékhaly-Camara’s article on African literature in the January 1959 issue appears to be the first such article by a Black African ever to appear in a Chinese journal.

Although incorporated as part of the section featuring African poetry on the contents page along with compatriot Flavien Ranaivo, Madagascan poet Jacques Rabemananjara's long poem 'Antsa' ('Eulogy') appears after Zhang's postscript and has several pages dedicated to it. Leaving aside the issue of whether Madagascan poetry should be considered as part of an African corpus, the space allocated to his poem and the detailed profile that follows it made Rabemananjara the first 'African' writer to be elevated in this manner since Abrahams; his profile thus illuminates the implicit criteria for such a paratextual handling. Firstly, unlike Abrahams who had remained in exile, Rabemananjara had returned to his people after furthering his education in France; his subsequent activities placed him on the frontline of his people's struggle for freedom. Rabemananjara was elected to the French National Assembly in 1946 but was imprisoned for nine years for allegedly having instigated a massive nationalist rebellion against the colonial authorities in 1947.¹² Translator Shen Baoji related these events and was careful to emphasize the barbarity of the "massacre" that suppressed the revolt, even offering statistics regarding the number of dead and incarcerated.¹³ Having thoroughly discredited the colonial authorities through this account of wanton violence, Shen immediately described how "our patriotic poet" Rabemananjara was given a ten-year

¹² Compan, 'Rabemananjara, Jacques', 633.

¹³ Shen, 'Yi houji' [Translation afterword], 31. cf. ...发帝国主义者...用飞机大炮进行了史无前列的野蛮的屠杀。据统计，牺牲的和在森林中饿死的有9万人，被投入监狱的有2万人 ...。

sentence by them as well as the developments that ultimately led to his release.¹⁴ Shen mentioned that the poem, which he renamed ‘Zuguo’ (‘Native land’), was written while Rabemananjara was in prison, affording him an aura of heroism that the Chinese tradition, even prior to the influence of socialist realism, had long valorized in foreign writers.¹⁵ Shen noted approvingly that Rabemananjara did not give up the struggle for his people’s freedom after his conditional release and closed his piece with substantial, emotive and largely unreserved praise for the poet and his poem.¹⁶ Where paratext writers such as Zhao Jingshen had strongly criticized the religious elements of the poems of Black writers and Yang Changxi had attempted to mitigate them, Shen merely noted that, although Rabemananjara was “a religious believer” and his works contained “mystical” elements, the “patriotic tone” of his work was “deeply moving”.¹⁷ Accentuating the poem’s optimism, he praised Rabemananjara for being “full of confidence” under “difficult” conditions and for celebrating his country’s “glorious past” and its “happy future”. In Rabemananjara’s repetition of his country’s name and the word “freedom”, Shen found a “sincere rallying cry” that could not fail to “resonate” with people “living under the same fate”

¹⁴ Shen, 31. cf. 我们的爱国诗人...法国帝国主义者当然饶不了他，判他十年徒刑。

¹⁵ Shen, 31. cf. 他入狱不久，就写下了《祖国》这部名著。

¹⁶ Shen, 31. cf. ...拉勃马南查拉因而也获得了附有条件的自由。虽然如此，诗人并不放弃他的斗争。

¹⁷ Shen, 31. cf. 我们读了这首诗以后，看得出拉勃马南查拉是一个教徒，作品中带有神秘的色彩；但是，在他的国家里，他的热爱祖国的调子还是深深地感动人。他在艰苦的日子里依然充满信心；他歌颂祖国光荣的过去和幸福的未来。他不断重复“马达加斯加”这个字，“自由”这个字。这些真挚的呼唤，这些人人都知道的字眼，多么简单有多么深刻，对于生活在同样命运之下的人们，怎么不起共鸣！因为这是被压迫的民族呼声！

because it was “the voice of the oppressed nations!”.¹⁸ Earlier in the peritext, Shen seems also to have gestured towards the existence of an African poetic lineage by saying that Rabemananjara “inherited [Jean-Joseph] Rabearivelo’s tradition” — an unprecedented move in the Chinese literary sphere.¹⁹ However, perhaps revealing his bias as an expert on French literature, Shen also opined that, having been “in contact with so many works by classical and modern French poets”, Rabemananjara “could not but have been a little influenced”.²⁰ As in the previous postscript, this type of remark in a peritext that is otherwise critical of the West suggested that African literary excellence was almost necessarily derivative to a degree. Nevertheless, Shen anointed Rabemananjara as one of the “three or four great African poets” to appear after the Second World War.²¹

In considering this first batch of poems, it is important to note that, with the exception of a few, they were largely obtained from Soviet publications.²²

Volland points out that this reliance on the Soviet Union for African works in

¹⁸ Shen’s construction of Rabemananjara as a worthy ‘voice of the oppressed’ is similar to such profiles of African American writers in the 1920s and 1930s (see chapter two).

¹⁹ Shen, 31. cf. 他...继承了拉巴利弗洛 (Rabearivelo) 的传统。不过他接触了那么多的法国经典作家和现代诗人的作品，不可能不受到一点影响。Despite this reference and his historical significance, only one of Rabearivelo’s poems, ‘A’wei A’wei’ (Chinese name), would be published in the April 1959 issue of *Shijie wenxue*.

²⁰ For more biographical details on translator and poet Shen Baoji (1908–2002), see ‘Shen Baoji’, <https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E6%B2%88%E5%AE%9D%E5%9F%BA/5647154?fr=aladdin>.

²¹ Shen, 31. cf. 第二次世界大战以后，非洲出现了三、四大个诗人，其中一个...拉勃马南查拉...。

²² Zhang Tiexian recorded that two of the poems were from a French magazine that he called ‘Xiandai Feizhou’ (‘现代非洲’) or ‘Modern Africa’. Although *Présence africaine* is not a direct translation of the Chinese title, he was most likely referring to this famous publication.

particular would persist throughout this period and speculates that the increasing vagueness as to the sources of translations in *Shijie wenxue* as the 1960s wore on were perhaps “to cover up the editors’ embarrassment”.²³ Building on Volland’s point, I suggest that this tension was already somewhat apparent in the October 1958 issue of *Yiwen* in which a lengthy article by a Soviet critic was used to supplement what the editors themselves most likely saw as the inadequate contextualization of the African works in the previous issue. In addition to providing a framework for understanding African poetry, the article offers much more detailed accounts of poets’ lives, political and aesthetic commitments, and noteworthy works. Besides comparatively nuanced profiles of the poets mentioned so far in this section (excluding the Mozambican poets as it covered only Francophone writers), it also dealt with Martial Sinda (Congo), Birago Diop (Senegal), Paul Nizer (Guadeloupe), and Fodéba Keita (Guinea) as well as the historian Cheikh Anta Diop (Senegal) and political and cultural luminary Léopold Sédar Senghor (Senegal). Many of these figures’ works would not be translated or dealt with in any detail during this period; even Senghor, among the most eminent of Black African intellectuals, would be largely ignored by Chinese translators.²⁴ This article thus represented a rare

²³ Volland, *Socialist Cosmopolitanism*, 244.

²⁴ There is some evidence of hostility to the Négritude movement (see footnote 80 in chapter three). To what extent this is merely to justify the exclusion of agendas that do not serve the testimonial function of Black literature requires further investigation.

opportunity for Chinese readers to learn of these writers and some of their ideas.²⁵

However, in a brief peritext added below the last paragraph of the article, translator Yuan Weizhao, unable or unwilling to allow the authority of the Soviet writer to be accepted unconditionally by readers, remarked that “these comments were not written by an expert on African studies” and that the “writer’s goal” was merely to “establish the status of several African poets in their national liberation struggles against colonialism” as well as “help readers to understand African poems”.²⁶ The first of these two statements seems again to be foregrounding the testimonial function of African literature: its role is little more than providing evidence of colonial atrocities and promoting anti-colonial sentiments. Nevertheless, Yuan’s source was recorded as the June issue of the Soviet Union’s *Novyi Mir* (“New World”) magazine and the poems by Dadié, Diop, Nénékhaly-Camara, and Ranaivo published in *Yiwen* the previous month

²⁵ The editors of *Yiwen* also published a volume of African poetry called *Xiandai Feizhou shiji* (‘Anthology of modern African poems’) during October 1958. This included the poems that had appeared in the October issue, as well as additional works by the same and other poets, including Noémia da Sousa (Mozambique), Baltasar Lopes da Silva (Cape Verde), Senghor and Sinda. The Soviet essay on Francophone African poetry was also re-published, as was an additional essay on Lusophone poetry by Angolan poet and political leader Mario Pinto de Andrade and an unidentified Mozambican writer; the latter essay provided more information regarding the background of the Angolan and Mozambican poems that had appeared in the journal itself and appears to be the first such commentary written by Black African writers that was published in China. It had also originally appeared in the May issue of the Soviet magazine *Inostrannaya Literatura*. With a print run not exceeding five thousand, this anthology seems to have had limited exposure among readers, despite being advertised on the back cover of the October issue of *Yiwen*. I will return to Andrade briefly in the next section.

²⁶ Yuan, Untitled paratext to ‘Fennu yu xiwangde Feizhou (tan xiandaide Feizhou shi)’ [Furious and Hopeful Africa (talking about modern African poetry)], 117. cf. 这些评述不是一个非洲学专家写的...作者的目的, 是要确定好几位非洲诗人在他们的反对殖民主义的民族解放斗争中的地位, 同时, 也帮助读者理解非洲的诗。

had all come from the May issue of the same publication. In addition, the poems by Mozambicans Santos and Noronha were first published in *Inostrannaya Literatura* (“Foreign Literature”) magazine, another Soviet publication, in May 1958. This is suggestive of the degree to which the Chinese coverage of African literature could be dependent on, and perhaps guided by, what was available in Soviet publications.

Although the September issue also increased Chinese readers’ exposure to South African literature by including ‘The Master of Doornvlei’, a short story by Es’kia Mphahlele, as well as a summary of *2nd Class Taxi*, a novel by Sylvester Stein, problems that had emerged in the paratextual presentation of Peter Abrahams’s works seem to have resurfaced. Mphahlele’s story is the only work by a Black African writer in a long section devoted to short fiction by Asian writers. It appears at the end of the section and lacks any kind of paratextual contextualization other than that the source text was published in the June 1957 issue of *Fighting Talk* magazine.²⁷ The appeal of this story may have been its depiction of “social injustice” in a “rural setting”, a common theme, according to Iovene, of a number of Black American stories introduced in *Yiwen* during this period.²⁸ Mphahlele’s ‘master’ Sarel Britz, reminiscent of the

²⁷ Postscripts also follow some Asian stories.

²⁸ Iovene, *Tales of Futures Past*, 61.

agricultural “landlord-gentry” that had been “destroyed” by the CCP during the land reform process of the early 1950s, may have reminded readers of the inequalities of the old society from which they had recently been delivered.²⁹ Moreover, the story’s evocation of the brutality and callousness of the treatment that Britz meted out to his “labour tenants”, despite his claims of fairness to all his workers, was perhaps thought to require no further contextualization: it was inevitable in an agricultural economy dominated by landlords and therefore both familiar and realistic.³⁰ However, given that Mphahlele, like Abrahams, hailed from a population group that was marginalized and discriminated against in South Africa’s settler colonial society, the absence of information about him once again raises ethical concerns (see chapter three). Stein, on the other hand, was a white author who was misidentified as “Black” in the news item regarding his novel in the “World Literature and Art” section.³¹ While Stein’s works would never be translated in China, this summary of the plot of the story fortuitously provided some useful contextual information for readers: it profiled the ANC as “the indigenous people of South Africa’s earliest and biggest organization” which was committed to “striving for unity, opposing racial discrimination, and fighting for democratic rights” and characterized South

²⁹ See Karl, *Mao Zedong and China in the Twentieth-Century World*, 81.

³⁰ Mphahlele, *In Corner B*, ‘The Master of Doornvlei’.

³¹ Notice entitled ‘Yibu Nanfei heiren zuojiade xin zuopin’ [A new work by a Black South African writer], 236. cf. 据英国《工人日报》报导，南非黑人作家西尔维斯特·斯坦因（Sylvester Stein）出版了他的新作品《二等出租汽车》。...在法西斯主义、种族主义统治之下的南非是政治斗争很激烈的地方，费弗罗偶然也参加到支持非洲人国民大会（非洲人国民大会是南非土著人民最早最大的组织，该会的宗旨是为争取非洲人团结，反对种族歧视和争取民主权利而斗争）...西·斯坦因生动地描写了费弗罗在政治上的迅速成长，同时把南非人民的生活也真实而有趣地反映出来。

Africa, under “fascist, racist rule”, as a site of “intense political struggle”. Stein was praised for “vividly” depicting the main character Phofolo’s (inaccurately transliterated as ‘Feifuluo’) “rapid political maturation” and for “reflecting the lives of South Africans” in a “realistic and amusing” fashion, although the epitext writer was most likely simply reproducing what had been printed in the source item in Britain’s *Daily Worker*.

In an apparent attempt to increase the coverage of Black African literature in an issue otherwise dominated by Asian works, brief stories from Africa were featured in the section dedicated to folktales; they are listed as Ethiopian, West African and “Bantu”. ‘Niao guniangmen’ (‘Bird girls’) is the only African story introduced by a translation postscript. After some brief comments regarding the geographical distribution and make-up of the ‘Bantu’ peoples, the translator, Chen Zhongfu, indicated that the story’s origins lay with the Zulus of South Africa.³² Noting that the development of the ‘Bantu’, like all the peoples of Africa, was “thwarted by the colonialists”, Chen went on to provide a rather monolithic account of these peoples, claiming that many of the characteristics of “primitive clan societies” still remained in the middle of the twentieth century

³² Chen, ‘Yi houji’ [Translation afterword], 212. cf. 《鸟姑娘们》的背景是苏鲁族，他们主要居住在南非联邦。...因殖民主义者阻挠他们的发展，在本世纪中叶还残留着原始氏族社会的各种特点；这些故事所反映的也是他们原始氏族社会的生活情况，而《鸟姑娘们》所反映的时代则更早些...班图族民间故事告诉我们：班图人还不知道自然世界变化的规律，认为万物都有神灵，随时可以用魔法捉弄和残害人，只有学会魔法才能对付它们。...班图族的民间故事都有强烈的教育意义，他们教人要济人所急，不可以怨报德；它们告诉读者，世界上是有好人的，在危难时只要坚持战斗，终必得到好人的支援。

and that these folk stories thus reflected the lifestyles associated with such societies, despite his admission that ‘Bird girls’ depicted an even earlier period. More problematic was his contention that the stories “tell” the readers that the ‘Bantu’ “still do not know the laws of transformation of the natural world” and that they believe that only “magic” can overcome the “spirits” in all things that “can taunt or harm people”. This generalization on the basis of folk stories seems gratuitous, given that the traditional stories of many cultures (including China) contain supernatural elements; it may also have reinforced longstanding negative stereotypes regarding Africans. However, as narratives of the proletariat and therefore necessarily of value under a socialist realist paradigm, Chen could foreground the supposed “educational significance” of the folk tales of the ‘Bantu’ and thereby justify their inclusion: they “tell readers” to “help those in need” and not to “repay good with evil” as well as that you can “gain the support” of “good people” if you “persist” in your “struggle” in times of “calamity”. Nevertheless, it is difficult to assess whether stories from societies depicted as primitive in the modern era would have had wide appeal in the future-oriented China of the Great Leap Forward in the late 1950s. While a few African folktales did appear in *Yiwen*’s successor *Shijie wenxue* in the 1960s, works that presented Africans as modern subjects dominated the subsequent coverage.

Overall, the September issue of *Yiwen* certainly offered Chinese readers an unprecedented opportunity to enjoy the cultural products of a region about which they generally had very limited knowledge. Black African writers were presented favourably by Chinese translators; they were portrayed as talented and constructed as representatives of, rather than exceptions to, their peoples, who had collectively risen to the status of active national subjects with the same stake in the defeat of colonialism and imperialism as other oppressed peoples. Yet, the aesthetic or artistic elements of their works were overlooked or neglected in favour of their narrow testimonial function. This, together with the frequent omission of important biographical details, rendered one writer largely indistinguishable from another and created the unwarranted impression of an artistic, political or cultural unity, as it had in the paratexts profiling Black American writers in previous decades. Moreover, while the literatures and languages of the colonial metropole had influenced African writers, the unsophisticated remarks on this legacy in the Chinese paratexts risked diminishing the achievements of these writers. Ultimately, only the supplementation of more nuanced commentaries, such as the abovementioned Soviet article in the October issue, could temporarily mitigate these various effects. The era of uncritical acceptance of Soviet authority or expertise on Africa was, however, over. While problems would persist, Chinese paratext writers would ultimately produce more comprehensive commentaries on

African writers and their works as well as attempt, sometimes successfully, to circumvent Soviet mediation.

5.2 Loving “our Black African brothers”: The paratextual promotion of Ousmane Sembène and other African writers during the post-Tashkent translation surge

Not only was the Afro-Asian Writers’ Bureau Conference in Tashkent one of the most conspicuous and significant outcomes of the Bandung consensus regarding the centrality of cultural exchanges but it also shifted the translation of Afro-Asian works from the margins of literary activity to the centre of the CCP’s efforts to construct a new transnational identity for China. Yet, the use of translations in the forging of new national and transnational identities was neither new nor unique to the Chinese literary establishment. As Volland shows, translation was one of a number of cultural exchanges undertaken by the “young socialist nations” in the early 1950s with the objectives of reshaping the “identities of their various peoples” through building “a sense of solidarity among the different nation states” and stemming “the cultural influences from Western Europe and the United States”.³³ As I indicated in chapter three, the centre of that transnational enterprise had been the Soviet Union; by the late

³³ Volland, ‘Translating the Socialist State’, 53. As Volland notes, other forms of cultural exchange included “mutual visits of orchestras, writers, and drama troupes, the participation of...delegations in international competitions and festivals, and the exchange of students in fields such as arts, drama, and music”.

1950s, however, the CCP wished to overcome what it perceived to be China's inferior position in that framework. Ironically, Chinese cultural mediators set about constructing a new formation not unlike the previous one but this time with China itself as a "new centre of Third World cultural diplomacy".³⁴ The Tashkent conference inaugurated the full embrace of this agenda by the Chinese literary elite, some of whom, as shown in chapter four, had only very recently sought to limit the influence of the Soviet Union in literary sphere or shown any interest in Black literatures. As Duncan Yoon asserts, "the presence of a large Chinese delegation demonstrated the extent to which the PRC sought to present China...as a cultural model for the Afro-Asian World" and promote "Maoist notions of the role of art and literature...on a global stage".³⁵ While Yoon suggests that the conference was an important catalyst for the dissemination of Maoist ideas among global audiences (including African writers and intellectuals), my main concern in this section is to explore how, through publication choices and translation paratexts, cultural mediators positioned the country vis-à-vis its real and imagined Third World allies in the eyes of *domestic* reading publics in their attempt to construct a new transnational identity. Leading on from the previous section, I also consider how these figures dealt with the fraught issue of legitimating the translation of Black African writers' works for these publics. I propose that, while the testimonial function of

³⁴ Volland, 72.

³⁵ Yoon, "'Our Forces Have Redoubled'", 242.

an African writer's work continued to be deployed in justifying selection for publication, criteria that had previously applied to writers from the socialist countries could now be foregrounded in the paratextual framings of African works. However, given that the Chinese literary establishment were also actively pursuing an agenda that complemented the CCP's diplomatic goals of achieving recognition among Third World countries beyond the socialist bloc, I contend that gestures of friendship, such as visits to China or writing approvingly of the country or the CCP's achievements, could be even more powerful factors in determining the fate of a given African writer's works. Moreover, direct exchanges between African and Chinese writers/functionaries may have been appealing for another reason: they provided a channel through which texts could circulate that evaded Soviet mediation. While the first part of this section considers how the paratextual framings of a number of African writers' works illustrate these claims in various ways, the second part is devoted primarily to a discussion of Ousmane Sembène's speech at the Tashkent conference and the range of paratexts that were used to promote and contextualize the two translations of his novel *O Pays, mon beau peuple!* (1957). I propose that Sembène was singled out for special attention and elevated in a manner approximating the 'model authors' of the socialist world.³⁶ I show that Sembène's success in China may have been impelled by his

³⁶ See my brief discussion of two such authors, Anna Seghers (East Germany) and Mihail Sadoveanu (Romania), in footnote 50 of chapter three. Volland uses the term 'model author' to describe Seghers (see Volland, 'Translating the Socialist State', 66).

promulgation of artistic/literary principles that resonated with Maoist theories in his speech at the Tashkent conference, given that his speech fortuitously converged with the aims of the Chinese delegation and could readily be appropriated for domestic purposes. Moreover, not only could his personal biography and works fulfil Black literature's well-established testimonial function but he appeared to embody the Maoist writer ideal and could easily be deployed as such. Lastly, Sembène's novels self-consciously presented a genuinely Marxist vision, making them not only suitable for consumption by Chinese readers but also for a degree of aesthetic commentary not often seen in paratextual framings of Black writings. The unprecedented paratextual handling of Sembène and his works simultaneously enabled the dissemination of information and views on Africa that had hitherto never been available in the Chinese context. All this appears to have made him, however briefly, the ideal vehicle for an alternative view of Africa and Blackness that could bolster the argument for engagement with the continent among Chinese reading publics.

At the outset, it is necessary to substantiate my claim that the Chinese literary establishment showed a particular interest in Sembène and his works. One possible measure of institutional receptiveness to particular writers in this context is not only the number of times their works appear in major translation journals but also how many separate publications they achieve. By the end of

the brief surge in the translation of African works (1958–1965), a handful of African writers had had their works published in separate editions or had been anthologized at least once in addition to sporadic appearances in *Shijie wenxue*, the successor to *Yiwen*. Sembène, on the other hand, could boast three separate publications, as well as a comparatively high number of works in multiple issues of this journal. It is important to note that Writers Press (‘Zuojia chubanshe’), an official publisher and arm of the Chinese Writers’ Association that advertised extensively in *Yiwen/Shijie wenxue*, virtually monopolized the publication of African works after 1959.³⁷ That they published both *Zuguo, wo ke’aide renmin* (the second translation of *O Pays, mon beau peuple!*) in 1961 and *Shende ernü* (*Les bouts de bois de Dieu*) in 1964 seems to be indicative of the writer’s special status in the eyes of the establishment. No Black American authors had achieved such sustained recognition during this era, with the exception of W.E.B. Du Bois who was not primarily a novelist. Sembène’s publication record in China also temporarily surpassed that of Peter Abrahams but, as I will show later, the discrepancy between the two is most marked in the way in which they were presented in the paratexts to their respective works.

It is worth noting at this juncture that the seemingly complete control of the publishing of African works by Writers Press after 1959 may have been a

³⁷ Volland, *Socialist Cosmopolitanism*, 236.

deliberate move, especially since a number of publishing houses had rushed to produce translations of novels by Black African writers in 1959 — but not subsequently. Shanghai Literature and Arts Publishing House (‘Shanghai wenyi chubanshe’) published Abrahams’s *Mine Boy* and Benjamin Matip’s *Afrique, nous t’ignorons!* (Feizhou, women bu liaojie ni!) while China Youth Press (‘Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe’) released the first version of Sembène’s *O Pays, mon beau peuple!* (called *Saineijiade erzi* or ‘Son of Senegal’) as well as Ferdinand Oyono’s *Le vieux nègre et la médaille* (Lao heiren he jiangzhang). I argue that both this first version of Sembène’s novel and the works by Cameroonian writers Oyono and Matip fall under the previous regime of paratextual protocols that I discussed in relation to Abrahams in chapter three: almost no biographical information was provided about the authors but the testimonial function of their novels was foregrounded.³⁸ The peritextual summary at the front of Sembène’s book opens with the statement that the book “reflects the lives and struggle of the West African Senegalese people under French colonial rule”.³⁹ While the writer’s skill was praised effusively for his “vivid” description of Africa’s “wild and beautiful natural scenery” and its people’s “rich and colourful” yet “impoverished and powerless” lives, no biographical details were offered about him; as in the case of the first translation

³⁸ See chapter three for my discussion of how *Mine Boy* anticipated certain features of the paratextual handling of post-1959 works.

³⁹ ‘Neirong tiyao’ [Synopsis of content (*O Pays, mon beau peuple!*)]. cf. 这是一部反映在法国殖民统治下的西非塞内加尔人民的生活与斗争的小说。...作者用他的采笔生动地描摹了非洲的粗犷而美丽的自然风光和非洲人民丰富多彩又贫困无权的生活...

of Abrahams's *The Path of Thunder*, the responsibility for providing details about the text and its author was abdicated to a longer Soviet introduction. In the peritextual summary of Oyono's book, he is merely described as a "young writer" from Cameroon whose book depicts the "impoverished and miserable lives" as well as "customs, thoughts, feelings and aspirations" of the Cameroonian people in the "chains of colonialism".⁴⁰ Similarly, the unsigned afterword to Matip's book simply noted that he was a "modern young writer" and that having a Black writer depict the lives of Black people "gives you an authentic feeling".⁴¹ In addition, besides "exposing how the French cruelly and immorally blackmail the kind local farmers", the afterword claimed that Matip emphasized the fierce hatred for colonial policies among the young generation of Africa. Thus, as was the case with the first poems and stories introduced in *Yiwen* discussed in the last section, the writers of the paratexts to this first batch of post-Tashkent African novels continued to rely on familiar discursive frameworks.

While Writers Press retained some aspects of these frameworks, it introduced novel paratextual protocols, starting with the incorporation of African literature,

⁴⁰ 'Neirong tiyao' [Synopsis of content (*Le vieux nègre et la médaille*)]. cf. 这是西非喀麦隆青年作家奥约诺所写的...在这本书里, 作者同时描绘了喀麦隆人民在殖民主义枷锁中所过的贫困悲惨的生活、他们的风俗习惯、思想感情和愿望...

⁴¹ Fei, 'Houji [Afterword (*Afrique, nous t'ignorons!*)], 124-25. cf. 作者本傑明·马迪是非洲一位当代青年作家, 由一位黑人作家来描写黑人的生活, 特别使人有一种真实的感觉...作者...除了揭露了法国人怎样残酷地、不道德地敲诈当地的善良农民以外, 他还强调了非洲青年一代对殖民政策抱着多么强烈的憎恨。

together with Asian works, into a series called ‘Yafei xiandai wenxue zuopin’ (‘Modern Afro-Asian literary works’) from 1963 onwards. The impetus behind this series may have been the Second Afro-Asian Writers Conference in Cairo in February 1962, which, according to Yoon, evinced a greater “commitment to South-to-South translation practices [that] would produce a number of anthologies of poems, short stories, and folk tales published in China and other countries”.⁴² Any works published in or after 1963 typically utilize the protocols that I will elaborate on here.⁴³ Firstly, the series itself was advertised by a growing corpus of published Afro-Asian works that were often listed on the back page of individual books or on complimentary bookmarks. Complemented by a logo featuring a pen and a book super-imposed on a world map featuring only Africa and Asia, the list gestured towards an imaginary Afro-Asian community while the inclusion of the names of the countries in parentheses next to the titles of the books accentuated the success of the publisher in introducing Chinese readers to a wide range of writers who represented the countries now to be viewed as friends and allies in the global struggle against imperialism and colonialism. While the front covers of each book were different, Black African works typically featured line drawings of determined and defiant Black figures, sometimes even brandishing arms; such representations of the militancy of

⁴² Yoon, ‘Cold War Africa and China’, 56–57. The extent to which participation in the Afro-Asian Writers Bureau actually influenced translation decisions in the Chinese context requires further investigation but falls beyond the scope of the present work.

⁴³ It is also worth adding that many of the works published in this series often first appeared in *Yiwen/Shijie wenxue*.

Africans were a far cry from the slavish and passive stereotypes of earlier decades. These figures were often juxtaposed with natural scenery, dominated by images of palm trees which seem to have become a visual emblem of Black Africa across this series and may have perpetuated the impression that the continent lacked urban development.⁴⁴ Writers were accorded an unprecedented status by being introduced with both a peritextual profile, containing significantly more biographical information than previously, and a photo on the inside flap of the back cover of each book. I will refer to the content of these profiles extensively below.



Figure 3: A complimentary bookmark with logo, listing the books in Writers Press's 'Afro-Asian' series (photograph by author)

⁴⁴ Interestingly, book covers of North African texts often featured buildings, uniformed soldiers, or indoor settings.

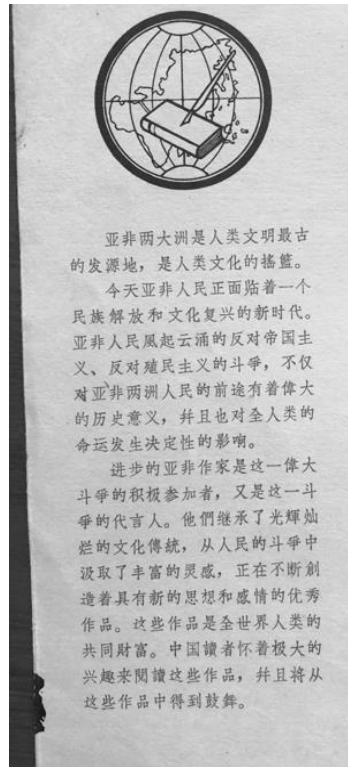


Figure 4: The general introduction with logo on the inside flap of the front cover (photograph by author)



Figure 5: A writer's profile and photograph on the inside flap of the back cover (photograph by author)

Finally, a general introduction, on the inside flap of the front cover of each book, drew on themes that had become popular since Bandung but had hitherto not featured prominently in the literary/translation sphere, as shown in chapter four. It offered a radically different vision of Africa than had been prevalent in China since the turn of the twentieth century. It opened by figuring Africa and Asia as “the most ancient places of origin of human civilization and the cradles of human culture”; this evocation of a shared and equivalent historical identity sharply diverged from the race-based relegation of Africa to the bottom of the global hierarchy of continents in which the view of it as fundamentally ahistorical nullified any serious considerations of either its histories or cultures.⁴⁵ The second paragraph depicted Africans and Asians as embroiled in a struggle for “liberation” and the “revival of culture” against “imperialism and colonialism”, the outcome of which would be “decisive” for “all of humanity”. Here, the Bandung emphasis on the protection and promotion of culture was foregrounded, and Africans were situated at the forefront of a struggle of global significance, imbuing them with the agency to alter the course of world history. Writers were crucial in this projection of a transnational community: they were both “proactive participants in the great struggle of the era” as well as its

⁴⁵ Untitled series introduction. cf. 亚非两大洲是人类文明最古的发源地，是人类文化的摇篮。今天亚非人民正面临着一个民族解放和文化复兴的新时代。亚非人民...反对殖民主义的斗争，不仅对亚非两洲人民的前途有着伟大的历史意义，并且也对全人类的命运发生决定性的影响。进步的亚非作家是这一伟大斗争的积极参加者，又是这一斗争的代言人。他们继承了光辉灿烂的文化传统，从人民的斗争中汲取丰富的灵感...这些作品是全世界人类的共同财富。中国读者怀着极大的兴趣来阅读这些作品，并且将从这些作品中得到鼓舞。

“spokespersons”. They were “the inheritors of glorious cultural traditions” who drew their inspiration “from the people’s struggle”, producing works that were the “shared riches of all humanity”. Finally, the imagined Chinese reading publics were portrayed as having “approached the reading of these works with great interest” and as having “gained encouragement from them”. Given the recency of their exposure to African literature, this final statement functioned more as an injunction to readers on how they might engage with these works in the future rather than as an account of the actual situation. The overarching presence (or absence prior to 1963) of these formal paratextual structures must be borne in mind in my discussion of specific writers below.

Besides an African writer’s broadly anticolonial stance and ability to ‘testify’ to the misery of life under colonialism through their biography or writings, the criterion that looms largest in the selection of works for *individual* publication (assuming as I have done thus far that this was a marker of a higher status in the Chinese literary sphere) may have been gestures of recognition on the part of these writers themselves. As shown in chapter three, political prominence in the socialist bloc, whether this be through activism or through a position in a socialist government or organization, and/or achieving recognition through winning high-profile awards was often used to rationalize the translation of certain works. As I indicate throughout this section, these criteria now became

available, although in slightly modified form, for justifying the translation of African writers' works: the vast majority of published writers were also political activists or revolutionaries in their home countries as well as frequent participants in socialist-aligned international meetings and congresses.

However, in this new era in which China was seeking to overcome its international isolation, travelling to China itself and/or writing about China could be even more influential in determining whose works achieved individual publication. Most of the handful of writers whose works had been published separately had visited China prior to publication — an action that appears to have been received, or constructed as, a powerful gesture of public recognition, often pointedly mentioned in the paratexts of these books. Sembène visited China immediately after the Tashkent conference, as did the Angolan poets Mário Pinto de Andrade and Viriato da Cruz; the two poets' works were anthologized in 'Poems of Angola' (*Angelade shiji*) in 1963. Andrade's poems had not been chosen for the September issue of *Yiwen*, but it is possible that his speech at the Tashkent conference as well as his visit motivated the inclusion of his poems, along with his essay on African Lusophone poetry, in the additional anthology published in October (see footnote 25 in the last section). According to the peritext to his 1963 volume 'Anthology' (*Shiji*), Mozambican "poet, political commentator and activist" Marcelino dos Santos had visited China in

1954 and had taken part in the Afro-Asian Writers Bureau Conferences in Tashkent and Cairo in 1962; that his initial visit had not inspired much interest is suggested by the fact that his first Chinese translator Zhang Tiexian, as shown in the last section, had not initially been aware that Santos wrote under a penname, had not mentioned his 1954 visit, and had not provided any biographical details about him.⁴⁶ The poets Kofi Awoonor (Ghana) and Mamadou Gologo (Mali) visited in 1963 and their respective volumes of poems “The Black Eagle Awakens” (*Heisede ying juexingle*) and *Tornade d’Afrique* (*Feizhoude fengbao*) were published in 1964 and 1965. The abovementioned Viriato da Cruz and these two figures may have been favoured for an additional reason: all three had presented China in a positive light in their writings prior to the publication of their works. Cruz was described as “having written a few poems about our country”, after he was inspired by personally witnessing “the pioneering work being done during our country’s Great Leap Forward” in the peritextual introduction to his section of the abovementioned anthology.⁴⁷ He would go on to live in exile in China from 1966 and die there in 1973, disillusioned and having fallen afoul of the Party which had often sought to use him for propaganda purposes.⁴⁸ According to his peritextual profile, Gologo

⁴⁶ Untitled peritextual profile of Marcelino Dos Santos. cf. 马尔塞林诺·多斯·桑托斯笔名里利尼尤·米凯亚是东南非洲莫三鼻给青年诗人、政论家和政治活动家...1954年访问过我国...1958年和1962年参加过在塔什干和开罗举行的亚非作家会议。

⁴⁷ Biographical note entitled ‘Weiliyatuo Da Keluzi’ [Viriato Da Cruz], 22. cf. 当时曾写了一些有关我国的诗歌作品...亲自看到我国大跃进运动的创举...

⁴⁸ For a full account, see Sun, ‘Viriato da Cruz and His Chinese Exile’, 1–17.

“wrote down his impressions of China in a book called *Weidade Zhongguo* (‘Great China’) in which he enthusiastically praised the glorious success our country has gained through the construction of socialism as well as the superiority of our people’s commune system”.⁴⁹ This was most likely the antecedent of Gologo’s book *China: A Great People, a Great Destiny*, published in 1965. Awoonor’s poem ‘Zhi Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo’ (‘To the People’s Republic of China’) in his anthology was dedicated to China and the title poem of the anthology, as Yoon suggests, contains an allusion to the CCP in which they are presented as African allies.⁵⁰ In addition, Awoonor, as noted in his peritextual profile, supplied the original drafts of his poems for translation while it is possible to infer that Gologo did the same, based on the comment in his profile that his anthology had been “compiled and translated from the poet’s works of recent years”.⁵¹ The playwright Banquoura Kanfory (Guinea), who, judging from the general absence of reference information about him, appears to have been a relatively minor figure, was also invited to China by the All-China Youth Federation in 1964 after his attendance at an AAWB committee meeting in Bali in 1963; his play *Le patriote (Aiguoazhe)* was

⁴⁹ Untitled peritextual profile of Mamadou Gologo. cf. 戈洛戈...把他的访华观感写成一本书，题名为《伟大的中国》，热情地赞扬了我国社会主义建设所取得辉煌的成就和人民公社制度的优越性...

⁵⁰ Yoon, “‘Our Forces Have Redoubled’”, 251.

⁵¹ Untitled peritextual profile of Kofi Awoonor (George Awoonor Williams). cf. 这十七首诗是根据作者提供的原稿翻译的。; Untitled Peritextual Profile of Mamadou Gologo. cf. 《非洲的风暴》一书根据诗人近年来的作品传译而成。

published in 1965.⁵² Finally, Ahmed Muhammad Kheir (Sudan), another figure about whom reference information is scarce, was recorded as being a “permanent member” of the Afro-Asian Writers Bureau and as having attended the Tashkent conference and subsequent meetings. However, his 1963 anthology *Zhandouzhi ge* (“Songs of Struggle”) contains a number of poems not only written in praise of China but composed in China, a point not mentioned in his peritextual profile.⁵³ Mohammed Turki Alsudairi indicates that Kheir “regularly visited China” from the late 1950s onwards and “sought refuge there” after being expelled from the Sudanese Communist Party in 1964.⁵⁴ According to Alsudairi, Kheir was a “vocal and unabashed Maoist” who would go on to appear “atop the leadership podium overlooking Red Guard rallies in Tiananmen, giving speeches denouncing American neo-colonialism, Soviet revisionism, and Chinese Khrushchevism” during the Cultural Revolution as well as translate Mao’s works into Arabic. His case perhaps most strikingly illustrates the extent to which African writers, activists or leaders could be deployed in service of legitimating the CCP’s ideologies and policies domestically as well as how gestures of recognition for China or the CCP could enhance the possibilities of translation and publication, especially since Kheir’s anthology seems also to have been compiled in China.

⁵² Untitled peritextual profile of Banquoura Kanfory. cf. 1964 年 4 月应我中华全国联合会邀请曾来我国访问。...他曾出席过 1963 年 7 月在印度尼西亚巴厘岛举行第二届亚非作家会议执行委员会会议。

⁵³ This is only recorded below various poems that offer the date and location of their composition. A number were written in Beijing in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

⁵⁴ Alsudairi, ‘Arab Encounters with Maoist China’, 8–9.

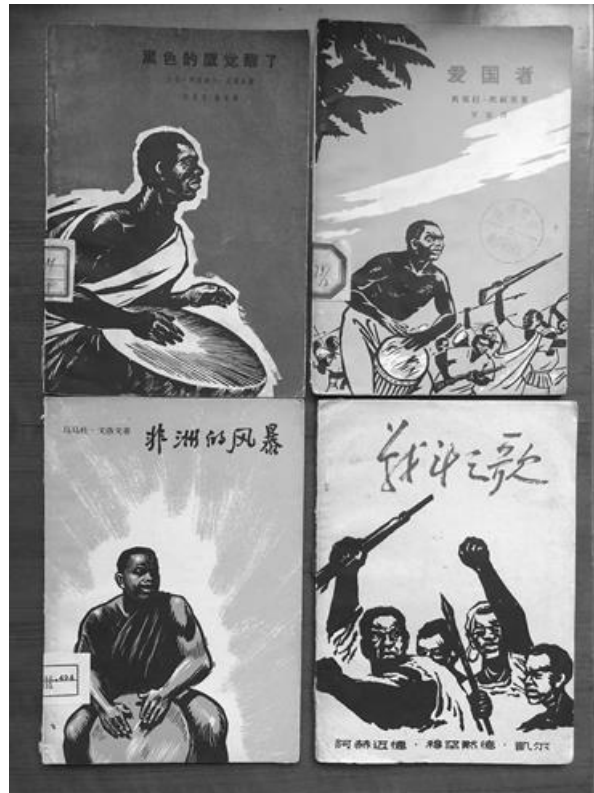


Figure 6: The cover images (from left to right) of works by Awoonor, Kanfory, Gologo and Kheir (photograph by author)

A small number of works were published by writers who do not appear to have visited China: Matip and Oyono's abovementioned books in 1958, the novel *Araya* (*A'laya*) by Ethiopian writer Girmācchaw Takla Hāwāryāt in 1962, a collection of dramatic poems based on *Poèmes africains* by Guinean Fodéba Keïta called *Shenye* ("Midnight and Other Plays") in 1963, and Senegalese David Diop's *Coups de pilon* (*Chuiji ji* or "Pounding") in 1964. Although he does not appear to have travelled to China, Matip did attend the Tashkent conference and made a speech that left a positive impression on at least three of the Chinese delegates, all of whom mentioned him in their reflections on the event, published in the first issue of *Shijie wenxue* in 1959. Liu Baiyu (who will

feature prominently in my discussion of the paratexts to Sembène's works) commented that "we [the Chinese delegates] could not but be moved" when "we listened to Cameroonian writer Benjamin Matip's calm and deep voice as he discussed the wise tradition of Black Africa's literature".⁵⁵ Prominent poet and translator Xiao San also praised Matip's speech, and, perhaps eager to embellish the dismal translation record of African works, referred to the writer's book as having already been translated, although it would only appear in March 1959.⁵⁶ Famous translator Ge Baoquan also referred to the translation of this book.⁵⁷ It is also possible that Matip himself had given his book, published by the French press Renée Lacoste in 1956, to the Chinese in October. It was also the first translation of an African novel in China to feature a palm tree on the cover and perhaps served as the inspiration for the abovementioned emblem of the Afro-Asian series. Despite this burst of publicity, however, none of the other works in Matip's tiny oeuvre were subsequently translated. Nevertheless, while the lack of any background information about Matip or his writings in these reflections is striking, this was the first time an encounter with a Black African writer had been described, let alone rendered in such positive terms, in *Yiwen/Shijie wenxue*. Takla Hāwāryāt's *Araya*, translated from Russian into

⁵⁵ Liu, 'Tashigande husheng' [The voice of Tashkent], 8–9. cf. 当我们在听到喀麦隆作家马蒂普以平静而深沉的声音谈到黑非洲文学的智慧传统, 我们不能不激动。

⁵⁶ Xiao, 'Cong Tashigan guilai' [Returning from Tashkent], 14. cf. 喀麦隆的进步作家玛蒂普, 他的著作《非洲, 我们不了解你!》早已译成中文...塔什干会议上他的发言很是精彩...

⁵⁷ Ge, 'Zai Tashigan bozhongxiade youyi' [The seeds of friendship sown at Tashkent], 17. cf. 无论是喀麦隆的青年作家班加明·马蒂普 (他写的小说《非洲, 我们不了解你》以右中译本) ...

Chinese, merits a longer discussion than is possible here. Nevertheless, besides its anticolonial and patriotic themes, the translator's afterword cited the novel's handling of historical events such as the Ethiopian guerrilla war against the Italians, that Mao himself had referred to in one of his "famous works", as resonating powerfully with Chinese readers who could relate it to China's guerrilla war against the Japanese.⁵⁸ Oyono's novel, as noted in chapter four, was the first African work to be promoted with a book summary in the November/December 1957 issue of *Yiwen*. It is possible that his book had been earmarked for translation even prior to Tashkent due to its favourable reception, according to Victor Ramzes, "by both the reading public and the critics" in the Soviet Union.⁵⁹ The translation was also based on a Russian translation of the original French that also appeared in the Soviet magazine 'Foreign Literature', according to a flyleaf page at the back of the book. As mentioned in chapter four, Keïta's dramatic poems/plays had been translated for *Yiwen* by Jia Zhi in 1955; republishing them in a separate edition may simply have been a convenient way to boost the number of African works in translation. As a high-profile artist as well as Guinean Minister of Defence and Security by 1963, Keïta was at the interface of art and politics; his works had already been promoted in the pages of *Yiwen* and his fame and position meant that the

⁵⁸ Jiang, 'Yi houji' [Translation afterword (*Arqya*)], 254. cf. 作品还用了不少篇幅对埃塞俄比亚人民抗意游击队的活动作了真实的描写, 在阅读这些篇章的时候, 我们也会情不自禁地联想到我国人民的抗日游击战争。我国人民的伟大领袖毛泽东同志在他的名著《论持久战》一书曾对埃塞俄比亚的游击战争做过这样的评价...

⁵⁹ Ramzes, 'African Literature in Russia', 41.

selection of his works could be justified in a manner not dissimilar to the way those by his counterparts in the socialist world had been in the early 1950s.⁶⁰ Diop, who died tragically in 1960, was another straightforward selection: his poems had already been sanctioned through their appearance in *Yiwen* and had been praised by his translator Zhang Tiexian.

In addition to these, several Angolan poets were anthologized who did not appear to have had any direct contact with the Chinese but whose works were probably introduced to them by Mário Pinto de Andrade. The latter edited an anthology called *Antologia da poesia negra de expressão portuguesa* (‘Anthology of Negro poetry in Portuguese’), published in 1958, which was the primary source text for the Chinese anthology ‘Poems of Angola’. Even more so than Keïta, many of these figures straddled the worlds of art and revolutionary politics and their biographies, much like Rabemananjara’s in the previous section, could be turned into paratextual narratives in which the heroism of the politically-engaged writer could be accentuated. Agostinho Neto, the future president of Angola and head of the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (PMLA), was described as “leading an armed struggle against the Portuguese colonialists” and as having written poems in prison while

⁶⁰ Untitled peritextual profile of Fodéba Keïta. cf. 凯塔·福代巴是几内亚著名的艺术家，现在几内亚共和国国防兼公安部部长。

António Jacinto took part in “the activities of progressive political and cultural education organizations” but “suffered persecution by the Portuguese colonial authorities”.⁶¹ Similarly, Mário António Fernandes de Oliveira “could not turn a blind eye to the miserable fates of the Angolan people who have been enslaved by the Portuguese colonial authorities” and thus “actively participated in the Angolan people’s national liberation struggle”, leading to his capture and imprisonment in 1959.⁶² The biographies of Andrade and Cruz, both important political activists and freedom fighters, were handled in a similar manner. The single exception to this paratextual presentation strategy is Geraldo Bessa Victor whose poems, despite his lack of revolutionary credentials, were anthologized by Andrade and thus legitimized by association with the other poets in the anthology. He was referred to as a poet of the older generation and as a prize-winner whose two poems in the collection “depict the lives and hardships of Angolan working women”, thereby signalling the testimonial function of his works.⁶³

⁶¹ Biographical note entitled ‘A’gaositiniu Neitu’ [Agostinho Neto], 8. cf. 阿高斯提纽·内图现在是安哥拉人民解放运动德领导人，领导安哥拉人民进行反对葡萄牙殖民主义者的武装斗争。...他的不少的诗，都是在牢狱中写成的。；Biographical note entitled ‘Andongni’ao Ruoxintuo’ [Antonio Jacinto], 46. cf. 安东尼奥·若幸托...积极参加安哥拉进步的政治与文化教育团体的活动。他曾经受到葡萄牙殖民当局的迫害...

⁶² Biographical note entitled ‘Maliao Andongni’ao Fei’ernantaisi de Aoliweila’ [Mário António Fernandes de Oliveira], 50–51. cf. 马里奥·安东尼奥·费尔南台斯·德·奥利维拉...对被葡萄牙殖民当局所奴役的安哥拉人民的悲惨命运不能熟视无睹，因此积极地参加安哥拉人民的民族解放斗争运动。1959年...被捕，经葡萄牙法庭判处徒刑，囚禁在监狱中。

⁶³ Biographical note entitled ‘Rela’erduo Beisa Weikeduo’ [Geraldo Bessa Victor], 32–33. 热拉尔·多·贝萨·维克多是安哥拉老一辈的诗人...其中最后一本诗集，得到卡米洛·贝桑尼亚奖金。...这本诗集中选译的两首诗，描写了安哥拉劳动妇女的艰苦和生活。



Figure 6: The cover images (from left to right) of works by Keïta, Santos, Diop, as well as the Angolan anthology (photograph by author)

While Matip seems to have captured the imaginations of certain Chinese delegates at the Tashkent conference and Sembène and Andrade were only mentioned in passing in their reflections, the latter two would have a far greater impact in the Chinese literary world. Andrade's abovementioned essay seems to be the first such commentary by a Black African writer to be published in China while Sembène's speech at the conference, translated and published in the final issue of *Yiwen* in December 1958, represents the first time that a Black African intellectual was allowed to address Chinese readers in a major literary publication and educate them on the history and characteristics of African literature. While the educational value of Sembène's remarks is indisputable (as

I will show below), it is highly likely that his address, inserted towards the end of the section on the conference with speeches by an Algerian and an Egyptian representative, was chosen to exemplify the Black African perspective for Chinese readers because it accomplished more than the mere presentation of hitherto unknown and important information. Sembène's exposition concerning the nature of Senegalese literature and its role in society also seemed to hew closely to Maoist theories. This is not to imply, however, that he was self-consciously alluding to Mao's ideas specifically; indeed, his "ideological and intellectual basis" in Marxist theory had been formed through his exposure to the French Communist Party and the union movement in France.⁶⁴ Early in his speech, Sembène insisted that Senegalese writers "do not live in ivory towers" but were themselves also "dancers, wrestlers [and] warriors"; stressing the integration of art and politics in Senegal, he added that these same figures were, together with the country's "political activists", also "politicians" and "sometimes even revolutionaries".⁶⁵ In Mao Zedong's 'Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art', he declared famously that there is "no such thing as art for art's sake, art that stands above classes, art that is detached from or independent of politics".⁶⁶ Elsewhere, Mao contended that "revolutionary statesmen...are simply the leaders of millions upon millions of statesmen — the

⁶⁴ Gadjigo, *Ousmane Sembène*, 116.

⁶⁵ Sembène, 'Saineijia'er daibiao Saimubeini Aosimande fayan' [Senegalese representative Sembène Ousmane's Speech], 97. cf. 作家并不是住在象牙塔里... 他们是舞蹈家、角力士、战士, 而现在和我们的政论家在一起, 他们又是政治家, 有时还是革命者。

⁶⁶ Yoon, "Our Forces Have Redoubled", 243.

masses”.⁶⁷ Mao’s emphasis on the centrality of the masses, as conveyed in his injunction to “China’s revolutionary writers and artists” to “go among the masses” in order to acquire “all the raw materials of literature and art” would also have resonated strongly with the following statement by Sembène:

Secondly, Senegalese literature belongs to the masses. Everything comes from the masses and comes back again to the masses. The masses are present at every stage of writing and performance. They participate in this [by] dancing and singing songs or by clapping their hands to express their approval, support and sympathy or condemnation of the artist. All this will be decided by the broad masses of the people.⁶⁸

Here, the deployment and repetition of the socialist term “the masses”, in the context of a Chinese literary journal, is allowed subtly to facilitate the re-imagining of Africa’s performance-driven artistic/literary scene as a form of revolutionary artistic/literary practice as opposed to a remnant of what may previously have been seen as primitive cultural rituals. This could not have been anticipated by Sembène but was seemingly in keeping with his agenda in this speech, which, as I will indicate below, certainly sought to challenge various stereotypes about Africa and its literatures. Furthermore, Mao was preoccupied with how literature should “serve the masses”, arguing that literature, like other

⁶⁷ Tang, *History of Modern Chinese Literature*, 62.

⁶⁸ Tang, 59. Yoon points out that Mao Dun also paraphrased these statements by Mao in his acclaimed speech at the conference (see Yoon, ““Our Forces Have Redoubled””, 244); Sembène, 97. cf. 第二，塞内加尔的文学是人民大众的。一切都从人民群中众来，再回到人民群众中去。在写作和表演的各个阶段当中都有人民群众存在。他们参与着这一些，舞蹈着，唱着歌，或是拍着手来表示他们对艺术家的赞许、支持和同请，或是对艺术家的谴责。这一切都要由广大的人民、都要由群众决定。

forms of culture, should be “of real benefit” to them.⁶⁹ Similarly, Sembène foregrounded the “practical significance” and usefulness of Senegalese literature, asserting that works that lack these “have no status” and suggesting that “poets and writers” were “moral guides and educators”.⁷⁰

Assuming that the usefulness of literature was one its primary values in a socialist framework, Sembène was able to offer a fresh perspective as well as invaluable information on two further issues about which many Chinese readers may have been ignorant or even misinformed: the status of oral literature and the development and uses of writing in Africa. After delineating the various uses of written Arabic and the Latin alphabet historically to write in Arabic, African and European languages, he noted the existence of indigenous African writing systems, asserting that “in actuality, people often do not know that Black Africa is among the places with the greatest abundance of written forms of expression in the world”.⁷¹ This contested assumptions, like those expressed in Zhang Tiexian’s postscript in the previous section, concerning the complete reliance of African writers on Western writing systems. However, Sembène refused to elevate written literature at the expense of oral literature by offering a nuanced description of the varieties of the latter, insisting that the written was

⁶⁹ Tang, *History of Modern Chinese Literature*, 55.

⁷⁰ Sembène, 98. cf. 第三, 塞内加尔文学是有用的。诗人或作家就是道德家或教育家。没有实用意义的文学作品是没有地位的。即或是从哲学意义上说, 我们的文学也是一群人进行社会活动的工具。

⁷¹ Sembène, 96. cf. 事实上, 人们往往不知道黑非洲是全世界上文字表现最丰富的国家之一。

less important than the oral, and stressing the role of the orator as “politician”, deeply involved in all aspects of the people’s political activities, from marching with them in protests and raising issues in their speeches to facilitating debate and communicating instructions, all of which made their literature “positive”, “useful” and “popular”.⁷² While Sembène’s speech may have been seen by the Chinese delegation as complementary to their presentations at the conference itself and may have contributed to the adoption of Maoist ideas by the AAWB, it is possible that it was earmarked primarily for its domestic uses.⁷³ Having Sembène’s foreign ‘voice’ articulate quasi-Maoist ideas in the principal translation journal of the era reinforced their universal applicability while simultaneously legitimating the theory and practice of African writers for whom Sembène rapidly became one of the most appealing avatars in the Chinese context. It also signalled the significance of the *turn* towards the Afro-Asian world, inaugurated at Tashkent and already enacted in the pages of *Yiwen*.

⁷² Sembène, 98. cf. 在黑非洲的确有一种书写的文学，虽然不及口头文学重要。...一位演说家同时也将是一位政治家，因为这位演说家在群众游行的日子里与群众一起在街上游行，因为他有义务在他的演讲中提出矛盾，因为群众可以同他进行辩论，因为他的演讲要发出行动命令，他的文学就是积极的，大众的，有用的...

⁷³ Yoon claims that what he (borrowing the term from Fredric Jameson) calls “symbolic Maoism” became a key part of the Afro-Asian Writers’ Bureau’s initial cultural platform. He explains that “‘Symbolic Maoism’ was not Maoism as it was implemented in China” but rather that it was called into existence when it is appropriated by an “outside actor” (such as the AAWB). Other examples include the French Maoism of the 1960s as well as “the referencing of Mao by figures such as Léopold Sédar Senghor, Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o” (see Yoon, 238–39).

Whether primarily due to his speech, his subsequent visit to China, or the general publicity in the socialist world around his works, Sembène's novel *O Pays, mon beau peuple!* (hereafter *O Pays*) became the focus of unprecedented critical attention, as well as translation and promotional efforts, over the next few years. This seems to have begun in earnest a mere two months after his speech appeared in the final issue of *Yiwen* with Ye Songnian's book summary in the February 1959 issue of *Shijie wenxue*, followed immediately by an extract from the first Chinese version of the novel in March and the translation itself appearing in April. Using the novel's Chinese title in order to promote the forthcoming translation, Ye foregrounded Sembène's working class credentials by noting that the writer was "working as a docker in Marseilles" when his "anticolonial novel" was published.⁷⁴ After claiming that the novel "attracted quite a lot of attention from critics and readers", Ye gestured towards to the realism of the work by stating that "the writer uses the autobiographical form mainly in his writing of this novel, taking his birthplace Casamance as its background".⁷⁵ In these respects, Sembène was not necessarily dissimilar to other African writers, but Ye went on to note that the main character of *O Pays*, Oumar Faye, whom Samba Gadjigo refers to as the author's "fictional alter ego", wants to "organize an agricultural cooperative so that the people of

⁷⁴ Ye, 'Saineijia'er zuozhe Sai Aosimande jinzuo Saineijia'erde erzi' [Senegalese author Ousmane Sembène's recent work *Saineijia'erde erzi* (*O Pays, mon beau peuple!*)], 166. cf. 在法国马赛当码头工人的非洲塞内加尔人赛姆贝尼·奥斯曼最近在法国出版一部反殖民主义的小说《塞内加尔的儿子》，颇引起批评家和读者的注意。

⁷⁵ Ye, 166. cf. 作者主要是用自传的形式写这小说的，背景也是他的故乡瑞金沙尔。

Casamance can cast off the economic shackles imposed on them by the white people as a first step towards liberation”.⁷⁶ In contrast to his precursor Peter Abrahams whose work had raised ideological concerns at times, Sembène’s view of the solution to his country’s tribulations was taken to be unambiguously socialist.⁷⁷ Most compelling, however, in light of the long history of the marginalization of Black writing in the Chinese context that I have been at pains to highlight in this project, is Ye’s closing appraisal of Sembène’s novel. He characterized the book as having a “high degree” of “ideological” as well as “artistic” value, a level of praise historically reserved almost exclusively for writers from the socialist bloc since the founding of the PRC.⁷⁸ In addition, he stated that Chinese readers could learn about the “character, lives and customs of African people” from the book, raising its status to that of a pedagogical text (not unlike many socialist/Soviet texts earlier in the decade) and, problematically, universalizing the fictional experience of Senegalese characters to the entire continent. Although the inclusion of the book summary as a promotional device and the presentation of Sembène as an ideologically acceptable writer may be taken as indicative of a high degree of institutional approbation, the overall absence of biographical information in this epitext is

⁷⁶ Gadjigo, *Ousmane Sembène*, 61; Ye, 166–67. cf. 乌马儿·法尹向组织农业合作社，使瑞金沙尔的居民能摆脱白人的经济束缚，作为向解放的第一步。

⁷⁷ That Sembène’s aesthetics were fundamentally socialist/Marxist is widely accepted. For example, Dominic Thomas argues that “the determining factor in the writings of Ousmane Sembène is the concern with exposing neo-colonial practices and dismantling capitalist societal structures in favour of Socialism” (see Thomas, *Nation-Building, Propaganda, and Literature in Francophone Africa*, 31).

⁷⁸ Ye, 167. cf. 《塞内加尔的儿子》一书不仅有高度的思想性，而且有着高度的艺术性。读者从这儿可以了解非洲人民的性格、生活和风俗。

noticeable. It is also worth noting that the brief introductory summary to the translation excerpt in the March issue also offers almost no biographical details beyond referring to Sembène as a Senegalese writer with a “working class background”; it appears to refer readers directly to Ye’s book summary for further details. Significantly, however, in light of my assertions regarding the importance of direct encounters and gestures of friendship, the anonymous peritextual writer pointed out that the author “had visited our country” after participating in the AAWB’s conference in Tashkent the year before. Thus, while there is evidence of a discursive shift in the book summary, the three paratexts that framed the first translation of *O Pays* (including the abovementioned synopsis at the beginning of the first translation itself) still fall under the previous regime of paratextual protocols, prior to the extraordinary interventions that characterized the Writers Press paratexts.

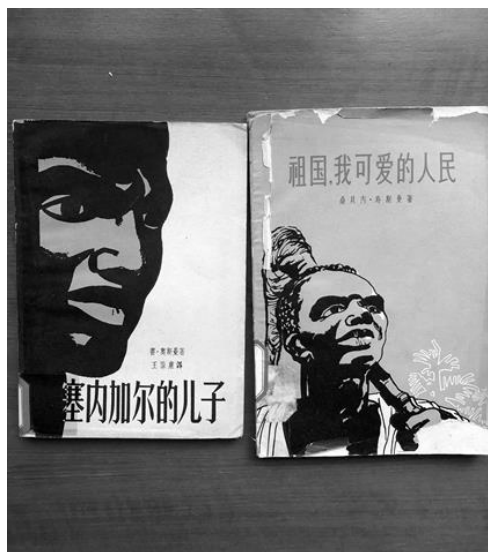


Figure 7: The covers of the 1959 and 1962 translations of *O Pays, mon beau peuple!*

(photograph by author)

In February 1961, a second translation of *O Pays* was published by Writers Press, this time under a title that was much closer to the French original: *Zuguo, wo ke'aide renmin* ('Homeland, my lovely people'). While the reasons for this second translation are unknown, a prominent advertisement on the back cover of the March 1961 issue of *Shijie wenxue* provides some potential clues. It is crucial to emphasize that the conspicuousness of this advertisement is unusual for any work of literature advertised in this space, let alone an African novel: most works were mentioned by name only in tiny font while this advertisement occupies almost half of the space on the back cover and features a picture of the book itself. It seems reasonable to infer that Sembène was singled out for promotion, and the content of the epitext further substantiates this. The first sentence confidently proclaims that this book by "young, progressive" writer Sembène is "excellent".⁷⁹ After providing a brief summary of the plot, it suggests that the novel "deeply reflects the anticolonial struggle of the Senegalese people" while "poetically depicting the larger picture of the lives" of these people; the testimonial and pedagogical functions of the text are thereby invoked. The advertisement closes with a mention of the previous translation 'The Son of Senegal', recording that it was translated from a Russian version and published by China Youth Press while noting that the new translation was

⁷⁹ Advertisement for *Zuguo, wo ke'aide renmin* (*O pays, mon beau peuple!*).cf. 这是塞内加尔的青年进步作家桑贝内·乌斯曼的一本优秀小说。...这本小说深刻地反映了塞内加尔人民反殖民主义斗争，同时也富有诗意的描写了塞内加尔人民生活的广阔图景。本书已有中国青年出版社译本，是由俄文传译的，书名译做《塞内加尔的儿子》，现由法文原作全译。

based on the original French source text. As stated earlier, virtually all the African translations after 1959 were published by Writers Press; it is reasonable to infer that, as the African writer with perhaps the highest profile in China, the publishing house was eager to publish Sembène's work. Secondly, the desire to retranslate the text from the original French edition may be emblematic of a larger struggle to overcome or reduce Soviet mediation but may also be symptomatic of the continuing lack of access to 'acceptable' African works, particularly longer ones like novels.⁸⁰

The Writers Press edition greatly strengthens the impression that Sembène had become the most favoured of all African writers. Indeed, their publication of this translation predated their 'Afro-Asian' series, and its paratextual apparatus is unique among all individual African works published during this period.⁸¹ Firstly, the use of red font on the front cover and the inside flyleaf pages is unusual and attracts attention. Secondly, it is possible that the first translation had been relatively successful, since an attempt seems to have been made to create a visual link with that translation: the cover features an image of the main character Oumar Faye, created by a Soviet artist, that had appeared on the first translation's title page. Interestingly, an outline of a cluster of palm trees was

⁸⁰ Sembène, after all, had published a prior novel called *Le Docker noir* in 1956 that may not have been available and would not be translated until the 1980s.

⁸¹ This book, along with a translation of the South African novel *Transvaal Episode* by white writer Harry Bloom and the aforementioned *Araya*, would not be included in this series.

added in the background, which may have anticipated the visual emblem in the ‘Afro-Asian’ series. Thirdly, a large black-and-white photograph of a young, pipe-smoking Sembène appears on the third page of the book, conferring on him a status and visibility that only Soviet/socialist authors had previously garnered (see chapter three).

Most extraordinary, however, is the content of the introduction to the book, written by Party Secretary of the Chinese Writers’ Association and Deputy-Minister of Culture, Liu Baiyu. As these designations imply, Liu was a figure of political as well as cultural import; that he had penned a lengthy introduction to the book is evidence in itself of its author’s elevated status in China. No other Black writer had ever been publicly endorsed in this manner by a figure of such ideological authority. It is worth noting that Liu himself was a “prominent writer in the Mao era” who “favoured hyperbole” and is remembered for his “lyrical essays that extol the beauty of the natural world”; these qualities are also manifest in this introduction, as will be shown.⁸² His deployment of hyperbole is immediately evident in the first paragraph when he describes Sembène’s text as “gentle, glittering, fragrant” where the writer “touches on” his “beloved land and people” but that, “once he turns to the white European

⁸² Ying, *Historical Dictionary of Modern Chinese Literature*, 113.

colonialists”, his “fury” is like “a whip, a sword, lightning”.⁸³ Liu continues with his praise of the author by claiming that Sembène’s “ideological and artistic power” was such that he could draw the reader into ‘loving’ or ‘hating’ what he wanted. After quoting an evocative description of the natural environment, the dawn and the masculine beauty of Oumar Faye from the translation, including a line that describes the latter as “very like a statue of a deity carved out of ebony”, Liu addresses his readers as follows:

Are you able not to love [all this]? But reader, you must know, all that you love is the *real* Black Africa”.⁸⁴

These evocations of the enchanting natural setting and the heroic main character thus become rhetorical devices for Liu, who appears to have had several objectives here. Firstly, he wanted to persuade readers of the power of Sembène’s prose in perhaps the first-ever such tribute to the literary prowess of a Black writer of any provenance in the Chinese milieu. Secondly, he wished to emphasize the realism of this and all that the author describes, a recurring theme in this introduction. Lastly, the line appears to connote an attempt to ‘correct’ the impression that readers have had of “Black Africa” (a term Liu uses throughout); juxtaposed with the stirring description of the magnificence and

⁸³ Liu, ‘Qianyan’ [Introduction (*O pays, mon beau peuple!*)], 1. cf. 当作者接触到他那亲爱的土地和人民时, 他的篇章上是那样温柔, 闪光, 芬芳; 但当他一旦转向欧洲白人殖民主义者, 他的愤怒像鞭挞、利剑、闪电。

⁸⁴ Liu, 1. cf. ...活似一。。乌木雕成的神像。...你能不爱吗? 而读者, 你要知道你所爱的是真正的黑非洲。Italics are mine.

dignity of Oumar's Black body, it may be read as a counterpoint to a cultural memory still haunted by the benighted image of the Black slave that once acted as a proxy for the Chinese themselves and the continent whose dire fate, it was once feared, foreshadowed China's own. In the next sentence, Liu points out that it is *this* Africa ("this lovely place") that is being "trampled by colonialists" and goes on to elaborate at length on the evils wrought by these invaders, who ironically "slander" this place and its people as "'ignorant'" and "'barbaric'".⁸⁵ By implication, therefore, the image of Africa and its people in China, that had long been mediated by Western authorities in the country from the days of the missionaries, was not only inaccurate but many of these demeaning epithets could be attributed to Westerners themselves. Indeed, Liu took great pains to marshal an abundance of textual evidence of this, a point to which I return below.

Later, Liu returned to the author himself, in a paragraph in which the topic sentence contains the statement that "the voice of Black Africans is sincere, magnanimous, and sonorous". He presented Sembène as embodying this by referring to him in the very next line as "this excellent Senegalese author, this excellent son of Black Africa" whom they (the Chinese delegates) had listened

⁸⁵ Liu, 'Qianyan' [Introduction (*O Pays, mon beau peuple!*)], 1–2. cf. ...这可爱的地方却被殖民主义者蹂躏着...而诬蔑这里是“愚昧”“野蛮”的土地与人民...

to at the Tashkent conference.⁸⁶ He then quoted three paragraphs from the *Yiwen* translation of the author's speech, allowing the "voice" and "son" of Africa to 'correct' the historical record regarding the history of African civilizations as well as its former cultural and geographic unity and the nature of the immense harm perpetrated by the imperialists. Liu added a further line below the extract that highlighted, despite the presence of other African writers and intellectuals at Tashkent, the extent to which Sembène had become a desirable avatar for Black Africa in China and a valuable anti-imperialist cudgel: "At...Tashkent, Ousmane represented Black Africa's denunciation of the imperialists".⁸⁷ The reproduction of a section of this speech is once again suggestive of its centrality to Sembène's literary trajectory in China.

After mentioning Benjamin Matip's purported claim that "the most important [aspect]" of Africans' lives is the "anticolonial struggle", Liu claimed that Sembène "proved this point" through his "outstanding novel" and asked rhetorically whether anyone could "deny that this is Black Africa's authentic literature".⁸⁸ Here, despite the evidence presented of Sembène and his novel's extraordinary status in the eyes of the Chinese literary establishment, the

⁸⁶ Liu, 2. cf. 黑非洲人的声音是真挚、宽厚而宏亮的。我们在塔什干会议上，听到乌斯曼——这个塞内加尔优秀的作家，黑非洲的优秀儿子，从文化方面讲到了他们的历史的遭遇。

⁸⁷ Liu, 3. cf. 在...塔什干，乌斯曼代表黑非洲发出对帝国主义的控诉。

⁸⁸ Liu, 4. cf. 正如喀麦隆作家马蒂普在塔什干告诉我们的：“在我们生活中最主要的就是反殖民主义斗争。”现在，塞内加尔作家乌斯曼以他这部出色的小说证明了这一点。谁能否认这才是黑非洲的正真的文学呢？

restrictive criteria for what *type* of Black African literature may be considered “authentic” and thus acceptable is apparent. The anticolonial struggle was the only viable major theme for this era and the only one constructed to be of genuine interest to Chinese readers who were now to see themselves as allies in this struggle. Other types of works, such as those produced by Sembène’s compatriot and arch-rival Senghor, who was primarily identified with the Négritude movement, remained largely invisible, and, by implication, inauthentic.⁸⁹ Liu then went on to mount a lengthy defence of this “authentic” literature in the remainder of the introduction by introducing ‘straw man’ enemies who allegedly “attacked the raising of anticolonial questions as ‘political propaganda’” in literature and sought to have literature “reduced to ‘pure white’ roses that cover up colonialism’s blood stains”.⁹⁰ To prove that works like Sembène’s were true to life, he incorporated extracts from an eye-witness account of colonial brutality in West Africa, from a news report on the Sharpeville massacre in South Africa, as well as from a personal letter he purportedly received from “Black Africa”.⁹¹ He then cited Western news sources as further evidence, including an article from the Associated Press and a headline in the *New York Times Magazine* that read “Africa — a continent in

⁸⁹ Akin Adesokan points out that the two “hardly saw eye to eye”, that Sembène’s “realism” was “at odds with the idealism at the core of Négritude”, and that Sembène appears to have satirized Senghor (see Adesokan, ‘The Significance of Ousmane Sembène’, 36).

⁹⁰ Liu, 4. cf. 他们攻击提出反殖民主义问题是“政治宣传”... 持这种论调的人的目的是让文学化为“洁白”的玫瑰花去掩盖殖民主义的血污。

⁹¹ See Liu, 6–8.

flames”.⁹² However, by this stage in his peritext, Liu had somewhat departed from the content of Sembène’s novel as his aim became not only to document the brutality inflicted on Africans but to eulogize their violent struggle against colonialism. He acknowledged as such when he noted that “although this book does not adequately depict the raging, red flames [engulfing] Black Africa, Ousmane, Black Africa’s loyal son”, has made his “contribution” in “authentically” depicting “the fighting determination in Black Africans’ hearts for the struggle and for freedom”.⁹³ Liu ended his impassioned piece by sketching the contours of a new transnational identity for Chinese people:

As Chinese people, we must show our concern for [our] Black African brothers’ struggle and our love for Black African literature. And this kind of literature is like the drumbeat of progress in our era, resounding through the hearts of people, the earth and the skies.⁹⁴

By enjoining Chinese readers to embrace both Black Africans and their literature, Liu was, probably unwittingly, ignoring the cultural obstacles that his readers would have had to overcome in order to accomplish this: over half a century of cultural, political and scientific discourse that had moulded an overwhelmingly negative view of Blackness among literate Chinese and consigned Black literature to the margins of literary and translation activity in

⁹² Liu, 8. cf. ...我们再看看登在《纽约时报杂志》上《非洲——燃烧的大陆》...

⁹³ Liu, 9. cf. ...尽管这本书还没充分地反映出黑非洲那通红的烈火，但，乌斯曼这黑非洲的忠实的儿子，他的贡献在于他真正发出了黑非洲人民心中要斗争要自由的战斗决心。

⁹⁴ Liu, 10. cf. 作为中国人民，我们关怀着黑非洲兄弟的斗争，热爱着黑非洲的文学。这种文学，会像我们时代前进的鼓声一样，响彻人心，响彻大地，响彻云霄。

China. Liu's voice was undoubtedly an idiosyncratic one: no other Black African writer or work would be eulogized so effusively and prominently in a paratext again during this period. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to correlate it with the subsequent increase in the number of Sembène's works in the pages of *Shijie wenxue*, beginning with a poem dedicated to Patrice Lumumba on the first two pages of the April 1962 issue and at least four more appearances over the next two years. It is also likely that Writers Press's innovative paratextual handlings of African writers and their works in their 'Afro-Asian' series were sanctioned or enabled by Liu's unique peritextual interventions.

That Sembène continued to be viewed very favourably, at least until the end of this first surge in the translation of African works, is also suggested by the publication of his socialist masterpiece *Les bouts de bois de Dieu* (*Shende ernü* or 'Children of the god') in 1964 as part of this series, framed by both a brief peritextual profile, like those of other writers, as well as by one of the lengthiest and most comprehensive introductions of any of the Writers Press editions. Praising the novel as "outstanding", well-known translator Gao Junqian referred to its success in depicting "the vigorous development of the African workers' movements and the growth of class consciousness during the period after the Second World War" before providing a thorough historical background for

these developments in his introduction.⁹⁵ Later, Gao noted approvingly that the “talented Senegalese author” was “already extremely familiar to Chinese readers” and went on to accentuate all the events that I have argued were critical to the favour that Sembène and his works seemed to enjoy: his speech at the Tashkent conference, his “friendly visit” to China, and exemplification of the Maoist writer’s ideal.⁹⁶ Gao again quoted Sembène’s speech directly, in which the writer announced that the “era of the broad masses of people” would arise after “the era of imperialism is broken” and, as noted earlier, appeared to be echoing Mao Zedong in his assertions that “the literature of this new era” should “serve the people and workers” and that it “belongs to the people”. Gao added that Sembène had “followed this principle in his own creative career”. While this was the highest praise that could be accorded to a foreign writer in this ideologically volatile era, it is clear that Gao based his positive assessment not only on Sembène’s successful implementation of a Marxist vision in the novel itself but the writer’s established function as an acceptable ‘face’ for Black African literature and an exemplary writer in the Maoist mould. This, in turn, was due to the efforts to promote Sembène over the previous years in

⁹⁵ Gao, ‘Qianyan’ [Introduction], 1. cf. 塞内加尔作家桑贝内·乌斯曼的《神的儿女》，是一本反映第二次世界大战结束后的年代中，非洲工人运动的蓬勃发展和非洲工人阶级的觉悟成长过程的优秀小说。

⁹⁶ Gao, 3–4. cf. 桑贝内·乌斯曼，这位有才华的塞内加尔作家，中国读者是十分熟悉的。他在一九五八年参加了一届亚非作家会议以后，曾经到我国来进行友好访问。他的著名小说《祖国，我可爱的人民》也早已有了两种译本，受到读者的重视。他在亚非作家会议上的发言中，曾经豪迈地宣告：“继帝国主义的时代之后，将是人民大众的时代”，而这新时代的文学...是“为活人和劳动者服务的”。他还说：“文学是人民大众的...”他自己的文学创作事业，就遵循着这个原则。

Shijie wenxue and through the paratexts to the two versions of *O Pays*, the “famous novel” that had, according to Gao, “garnered the attention of readers”.

Finally, in reviewing the post-Tashkent arc of Black African literature in China, it is essential to stress its *contingent* nature. Translation decisions, always constrained by ideological considerations, appear to have been impacted by a variety of non-literary factors, from the availability (or lack thereof) of texts and the unknowable vagaries of the personal encounters between Chinese writers/functionaries and African writers to China’s ongoing reliance on the Soviet Union for African works while tensions rose between the two. While publicity in the socialist world could be helpful, African writers’ literary reputations seem to have played little or no role in translation decisions.⁹⁷ Instead, their political roles and activities were stressed in their paratextual biographies, with only Sembène achieving consistent recognition for his writing itself. As already mentioned, the fact of having visited China or having expressed admiration for the country or the CCP appears to have had a considerable influence on whether these writers were translated or not. In light of this, it should be added that these translation efforts cannot be divorced from the broader performances of mutual recognition in which Black writers, leaders

⁹⁷ Besides Senghor, another prominent example was Chinua Achebe. An extract from his novel *Things Fall Apart* was published in the February 1963 issue of *Shijie wenxue* but never published as a separate edition.

and activists and their Chinese hosts and contacts participated. This was, after all, the era in which Black political and cultural personages were fêted by Chinese leaders and often invited to view or address massive rallies in Tiananmen Square.⁹⁸ This profusion of non-literary factors suggests that African literature, though temporarily garnering a degree of institutional approbation, never fully achieved institutionalization in the Chinese literary world. Instead, it was subjected to a narrow and relentless set of criteria, as this section has shown, and no significant deviations were tolerated. Although many of the constellation of negative associations that I called the Black slave topos in the early chapters of this work were gradually weakened as left-wing ideology took root in China, racialized thinking and attitudes, which many Black visitors encountered during this era, persisted under the veneer of the language of socialist internationalism and solidarity. The translation of African literature would cease with the build-up to the Cultural Revolution in 1965 but has been revived periodically since then.⁹⁹

⁹⁸As Fennell points out, “pomp and ceremony” would accompany visits by African leaders to China in the 1960s; this treatment was likely intended to be contrasted with the reception of African dignitaries in, for example, the US, where they could often not “stay in hotels or go to restaurants befitting their position and status” (see Fennell, ‘Race’, 262–65).

⁹⁹ Interestingly, one of the few foreign works considered radical enough to be published during the Cultural Revolution was an anthology entitled *Mosangbike zhandou shiji* (‘Battle poems of Mozambique’), published in 1975.

Conclusion

The police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis in 2020, which led to protests in support of “Black lives” across much of the world, represented another moment in which the persistence of racialized structures of institutional power in Western countries, and the violence that they could unleash, was exposed. As I write this, what Shih has referred to “a discourse of wounding” that positions China as “the victim of Western imperialism and the object of racism” continues to hinder and complicate a frank internal reckoning with the racialized aspects of Chinese society.¹ This is unlikely to change very soon as the nationalism that such ideologies of victimhood buttress is an essential source of legitimacy for the CCP. Yet, as Cheng asserts, there is no reason why China should be excluded from discussions in international scholarship that increasingly foreground the relationship between race and such issues as culture, nationalism, and xenophobia beyond “a binary framework of the West and non-West or between whites and non-whites”.² In this regard, my intention in this work has not been to expose Chinese racism — this is not after all a sociological or political study — but rather to reveal

¹ Shih, ‘Race and Revolution’, 156.

² Cheng, ‘Discovering China in Africa’, 4.

how an acknowledgement of the presence of racialized discourses and their entanglement in cultural and political relations and activities can open up fruitful avenues of investigation.

The present study takes up the discussion in the cultural domain of translation, tracing both the role of translation in the spread of racialized discourses and considering the way in which translation activities and the framing of translated texts themselves were impacted by such discourses. I show how, in the 1920s, the Black slave topos may have suppressed the recognition of Black literary modernism among the literary establishment while paradoxically functioning as a heuristic when marginal figures began to introduce ‘Black’ or ‘African’ literary works to Chinese readers. Certain Black poets were construed as *exceptions* to the collective abjectness of their ‘race’ while other important Black literary figures and their works could be diminished through the attribution of ‘slave-like’ qualities to them. Seen against the racialized backdrop of the era, it is also possible to venture an explanation for the curiously delayed engagement with Black literatures during a period in which works by writers from so-called ‘oppressed’ or ‘small and weak’ nations attracted a great deal of attention. The nascence of an alternative view of Black national subjectivity and agency is also discernible in the 1930s, in the wake of the literary establishment’s engagement with international left-wing, socialist structures and

causes. Yang Changxi's limited attempt to challenge certain pervasive stereotypes of Blackness and offer a degree of acknowledgement for the contributions of Black writers hints at these broader shifts.

Turning to the 'New' China of the 1950s, my discussion uncovers tensions between the racialized understandings of Blackness and the political objectives of the CCP. I complicate the periodization of notions of Third World, anti-colonial solidarity and 'Afro-Asian' cultural and political formations by locating the translation of the first African novel outside such frameworks and pointing out the striking absence of translations of Black African works until late in the 1950s. I propose that this absence could be understood as related to the persistence of racialized attitudes among the literary elite that were shaped in prior decades. I also show how the paratexts to Black American works in translation could be wielded to stoke anti-US sentiment among Chinese readers through their denunciation of racial discrimination against Blacks in America. Under the socialist realist paradigm in the literary sphere, the narrow assignation of value to a work by a Black writer was contingent on the extent to which it *testified* to the odiousness of the imperialist hegemon. This criterion was transferred into the colonial context once the translation of Black African works began, the major shift from earlier decades being that Black African people were now granted the status of national subjects who could take up arms

against their oppressors and their writers were presented as representatives of the revolutionary spirit of the collective rather than exceptions to it. Finally, I consider the irruption of the Black African translation enterprise in light of the history that I sketched and emphasize how paratextual interventions attempted to legitimate this enterprise and the political outreach to Black Africa that it represented. I also consider the limited extent to which an appreciation of Black writers and their works was enabled by this enterprise through a discussion of the paratextual framing of Ousmane Sembène's works.

Finally, my account is an attempt at establishing the 'lay of the land' in the history of Black African (and diasporic) literatures in China with a view towards future research that could deal with the trajectories of particular works or writers in China or analyse the language not only of paratexts but translations themselves. I maintain that a racialized discursive framework will continue to provide a useful lens through which to view the issues that emerge in such research. Ultimately, the present work highlights the extraordinary political and historical circumstances that enabled the translation of Black African literatures, given the considerable obstacles that originated both in the racialization of modern Chinese culture from the turn of the twentieth century and the associated Eurocentric/Soviet-centric orientation of the dominant literary establishment. It also documents, without valorising, the efforts of a range of

actors who felt compelled nonetheless to engage with Black American and later African works in the face of these cultural and literary forces for their own purposes. These efforts are also worthy of further investigation, although access to archives of material that could be helpful is extremely limited in China at present. Finally, while Black literature is no longer subject to such barriers in the more market-driven literary space of contemporary China, the paratexts and other writings of major and minor cultural mediators laid out in the present work act as a ‘transcript’ of ideological messaging about Blackness and Africa to Chinese publics for over sixty of the most formative years of modern Chinese history and therefore continue to be relevant to current understandings of China–Africa relations.

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