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*Chinese Writing Difference in Modernity:
The Discourse of Chinese Linguistic Modernity and
Cultural Translation*

By

Chun-Mei Chuang

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

2003

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Abstract

Chinese Writing Difference in Modernity: The Discourse of Chinese Linguistic Modernity and Cultural Translation

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This dissertation investigates the discursive formation of Chinese *linguistic modernity* in which the construction of modernity relied heavily on the multi-dimensional written linguistic reform, including Romanization and grammatical Europeanization. Despite its enormous impact on the Chinese imagination of modernity, the discourse of Chinese writing reform has often taken for granted.

This study can be divided into four parts.

Firstly, in tracing the discursive formation, this study rethinks the notorious motif “Chinese learning as substance; Western learning as function” and the related *Dao/Qi* distinction that were employed to negotiate the scale of westernization in the late Qing period. It points to the formation of the crucial notion of *writing as technology of artificial creative evolution* that aimed to *worlding* a modern China to the stage of “World History.”

Secondly, under the titles of the “alphabetic prejudice” and the “grammatical fallacies”, this study critically examines the ideology that European inflexive type of alphabetic writing is more “scientific”. Both western philosophers and Chinese linguistic reformers often adhered to this ideology.

Thirdly, it investigates the actual molecular discursive practices involved in the dynamic formation of Chinese cosmopolitanisms, as well as in the creative-transformation of modern Chinese written language. It especially examines the belief that the “literal rendering of European syntax” was a way to “improve” Chinese syntax and the “Chinese slapdash brain” [Lu Xun’s term].

Last but not least, it elaborates the molecular operation of the specific form of epistemic violence. By putting Derrida’s deconstruction of western metaphysics in the postcolonial context, we can begin to clarify the discursive and historical relationship between the *epistémé* we know as “western metaphysics” and the *epistemic violence* we find in various postcolonial projects of modernity. In the postcolonial situation, what we now call “Western Culture” is a *translational effect*. It is a field that is constituted through the becoming western of non-western cultures through translational practices that negotiate the cultural and linguistic boundaries.

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Chapter 1 Introduction: Writing and Difference in the Chinese Project of Linguistic Modernity

Those social scholars who embrace the evolutionary theory believe that culture has its own course of evolution, and that the western culture has achieved the climax of human culture. ...Now even those who indulge in the western culture become aware of the absurdity of this argument. (Tao, Meng-He 1935; in Ma (ed.) 1980: 140)

What we have called “discursive practice” can now be defined more precisely. ...It is a body of anonymous, historical rules, always determined in the time and space that have defined a given period, and for a given social, economic, geographical, or linguistic areas, the conditions of operation of the enunciative function. (Foucault 1969, 1972: 117)

The subject is always centered. Deconstruction persistently notices – unavoidably centering itself in order to notice – that this centering is an “effect-structure” entailing indeterminable boundaries that can only be deciphered as determining. (Spivak 1999: 323)

1. The Intra-Relationship between New Culture and New Writing

This study aims to clarify the discursive field of the Chinese written language reform started in early twentieth century. Thereby it seeks to elaborate the corresponding historically specific project of modernity other than the European model of modernity as presented in sociological tradition. Like the European project of modernity, it was also a grand project of Enlightenment, as Vera Schwarcz calls the

May Fourth movement (another name for the New Culture movement).¹ However, as I emphasize, the Chinese project of modernity was in the very beginning a *linguistic modernity*, in that the construction of modernity relied heavily on specific linguistic reform. This multidimensional literary reform aims to create a New Writing both in content and form. In its most radical version, it aims to replace Chinese “hieroglyphic” writing system with European alphabetic writing because the latter was believed to be more “scientific” and “modern.” The main purpose of this study is to examine this particular ideology by contextualizing this linguistic reform within the broader discursive field of the New Culture Movement, in which “modernity” was based on a grand wholistic ideal of New Culture.

Since its onset in the 1910's, the New Culture Movement, which proposed a modernist project of constructing a “New Culture” through radical detraditionalization and westernization, has been investigated over and over again in many areas of research, mostly as contemporary history or the history of thought.² Every year, Chinese intellectuals in China and Taiwan commemorate May Fourth and discuss the significance of the New Culture Movement in terms of politics, cultural values and literature. Among these myriad critical discussions, however, seldom have scholars

¹ Schwarcz, Vera. 1986. *The Chinese Enlightenment: Intellectuals and the Legacy of the May Fourth Movement of 1919*. University of California Press.

² Generally speaking, the New Culture Movement period began in 1915, and ended in 1923, overlapping with the years of the publication of its first and main advocate, the *New Youth* journal. See Zhang, Yu-Fa. 張玉法. 1994. ‘Press and Speech in the New Culture Movement Period: 1915-1923’ in *Collections of Institute of Modern History of Academia Sinica* No. 23 (June 1994). Pp, 285-329. <新文化運動時期的新聞與言論，1915-1923>，《中央研究院近代史研究所集刊》第二十三期 (June 1994)。

systematically looked upon the *intra-relationship* between the New Culture Movement and the multi-dimensional literary reform. By “multi-dimensional literary reform,” I am referring to the severe critique of Chinese writing as not scientific, the radical proposal of replacing Chinese writing by Esperanto or European languages which are alphabetic (and therefore more “scientific”), the invention and promotion of Romanization systems, both Mandarin phonetic symbols and *Pin-Yin* system, and the borrowing of European grammar and syntax in *Pai-Hua* (colloquial) literature. All of these constituted the kernel of the idea of New Culture and its grand project of Chinese modernity. The term *intra-relationship* stresses that these two projects (New Culture and New Writing) emerged and were constituted together in the same *discursive field* and only appeared separate in the later stage of development. A look at the earliest discussion and debate of the New Culture Movement will suffice to reveal that the critique of *Chinese writing* was at the center of the New Culture project. It is thus curious that few have systematically examined the relation between the multi-dimensional literary reform and the New Culture project over the past eighty years.

One of the reasons for this common oversight, I believe, is the fact that the various literary reform efforts have been taken for granted since the very early stage. That is to say, the thesis “the Chinese writing needs a radical transformation” was soon taken as a *given* after a very short period of heated debate in the beginning. Since then the question of literary reform has been transformed from a “why” into a “how.” Thus its complicated *intra-relationship* with the project of New Culture has been foreclosed without further articulation and has become as it were, a mute sediment in consciousness. A second and related reason is that, since the multi-dimensional literary

reform has been taken for granted, any discussion of the *discourse* about Chinese writing appeared unnecessary. Due to the common oversight of the *intra-relationship* between New Culture and New Writing, the discussion of New Culture Movement has been focused on general cultural tendencies and their political effects -- for example, on the differences and (in)commensurability of Western and Chinese cultures, and the specific notions of “democracy,” “science,” “progress,” “evolution,” and “modern” – *without* taking serious account of their integral connections to the multi-dimensional literary reform. On the other hand, the discussion of *Pai-Hua* or New Literature Movement has been focused on the *content* – the ideological critique of old culture and the enlightenment of the Chinese people. Seldom talked about is the *content of the form*, except for the assumption that *Pai-Hua* (literally meaning “plain language”) is preferred over *Wen-Yan* (‘classic script’). The question of *how Pai-Hua as a literary medium was constituted* has been left out. The fact that *Pai-Hua* was not just the language of the “people”, but was in a sense “Europeanized” and constituted through a certain process needs to be contextualized in terms of *the discursive field* in which it emerged, if we want to understand its significance to the New Culture project and its effects on the formation of later discourse.

This historical amnesia indicates a danger of cultural forgetting which leads to an unreflective ideology of the nature of Chinese and European writing systems. It is due to this historical amnesia that statements like “European alphabetical writing is more ‘scientific’ and ‘modern’ than Chinese” and “the Chinese writing system needs to become more like the European model” became the main ideology behind the century-long multi-dimensional literary reform. Thus, for example, the contemporary Chinese

linguist Shen Xiao-Long critiques the tendency towards “scientism” in modern Chinese linguistics, and argues for a revival of “humanism” of traditional Chinese language studies.³ This is because the theoretical framework of comparative linguistics proves to be insufficient for revealing the connotation and context of this linguistic “scientism.”⁴ Sociological studies of knowledge and a deconstruction of discursive strategies are needed for the study of the Chinese multi-dimensional literary reform which itself was based on a particular ideology of “scientism” – that European alphabetical writing is more “scientific” than Chinese. Even the dichotomy between scientism and humanism is in need of deconstruction. It is only by re-contextualizing the thesis “the Chinese writing needs a radical transformation to become more like the European model” back into the broader project of the New Culture Movement in the early twentieth century that we can begin to examine the presuppositions, strategies, and rhetoric used in the formation of the *consensus* discourse of the multi-dimensional literary reform that has been taken for granted for more than a half century. The investigation of the discursive formation of literary reform will in turn shed new light on those notions of “democracy,” “science,” “progress,” “evolution,” and “modern,” which were the slogan

³ See Shen, Xiao-Long. 申小龍. 1985. “Humanism or Scientism? — on Chinese Linguistics of the 20th Century” . Shang-Hai: Xie-Li Books. 《人文精神，還是科學主義？— 20世紀中國語言學思辨錄》上海：學林出版社。Pp. 180, 182, 186.

⁴ There is no simple way to define a term of abuse like scientism. It is often a term of accusation of course, which attempts to point out the blind spot of the privileging of a certain view of scientific method. The advocates of “scientific methodology” like Chinese May Fourth intelligentsia, however, would not hesitate to use this term to describe themselves. In the weak sense, scientism is a belief that the “hard” methodology of natural science as should be apply to the research of social sciences and humanities.

concepts for the project of New Culture Movement. These notions were set up as against the “Old Chinese Culture” which was considered to be both carried by and crystallized in the “backward” and “barbarian” Chinese written language in terms of both its content and form.

It is exactly this discussion of the *discourse* about the nature of Chinese writing system as compared to European writing that would link the multi-dimensional literary reform back to the broader project of New Culture and the notion of *modernity*, that is, to the question that *why and how Chinese New Writing was supposed to construct a new China of modernity*. This notion of modernity was of course based on a European model, at least ideologically. Nevertheless this “modernity” was already different in both its content and path; from the very beginning it was already a project of *artificial evolution* launched by Chinese “new” [westernized] intellectuals, as I will show in this dissertation. The notion of “artificial evolution” will play a central role in my reconstruction of the story of Chinese linguistic modernity and will be further elaborated as the discussion goes on, especially in this chapter and chapter 2. But in brief, it was an artificial *evolution* because for these intellectuals the purpose of this project was to push China forward in the *linear* line of evolution, which was assumed in their general belief of modernity. And it was *artificial* evolution because for them it was only through radical unconventional methods that this evolutionary movement could even begin.

The rest of this introduction will first present the major debates and intellectual camps concerning the proposal of abolishing Chinese classic writing and the opposition between *complete westernization* and *cultural authenticity* in the historically specific

contexts. These debates then are situated in a *postcolonial theoretical framework* in terms of the tension between a European capitalist-imperialist *epistemic violence* and Chinese intellectuals' active attempt of *worlding* a modern China, i.e., to move China forward into the stage of World History. Then I supply a methodological note on the Foucauldian analysis of discourse and method of archaeology, placed alongside postcolonial theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's application of deconstruction. The chapter then presents a preliminary analysis of the *discursive field* of the New Culture Movement, using the Foucauldian notion of discourse, followed by a discussion of a number of theoretical issues raised. Among these issues are some main themes that are common to nationalist thought in postcolonial situation across the globe, such as the rewriting of modernity, the repetition and reverse of Orientalism, the uneasy equation of Occidentalism with cosmopolitanism, and the problem of cultural translation. In addition, I raise some important themes more specific to the Chinese situation, such as those involved with the "Chinese prejudice" that Derrida identifies as part of the eighteenth century "crisis of the European consciousness." These issues constitute the thematic frame for articulating the nationalist discourse in the early twentieth century, and will be further discussed in the following chapters in the context of the Chinese project of linguistic modernity.

2. Historical Background: Chinese Writing, Westernization and Cultural Authenticity

In the nineteenth century, military attacks by European countries and Japan caused

enormous damage to China⁵. After a series of military defeats, a self-critique of Chinese culture and writing ensued. The path of this self-critique started with the official project of acquiring “western technology” in the arrow sense and introducing industries, and ended with the century-long *debate about westernization and cultural authenticity*. At the center of this debate was the notion of “Chinese substance, Western function” 中體西用 *Zhong Ti Xi Yong*, or “Chinese learning as the substance, Western learning as the function.” [中學爲體 西學爲用 *Zhong Xue Wei Ti, Xi Xue Wei Yong*]. The saying was first coined by the literati-officials of Qing Dynasty, like Zhang Zhi-Dong, to legitimize the national project of establishing modern industries, Foreign Affair Movement 洋務運動 *Yang Wu Yun Dong* [which will be further discussed in chapter 2]. Basically, the Foreign Affair Movement meant to suggest that China could borrow “mere technology” from Europe to improve national defense without losing the traditional values, that is, without any radical transformation of the political system and social order. When this project proved a failure in the defeat of 1894 war by Japan, many members of the new intelligentsia who has studied abroad came to identify the real problem as lying with the

⁵ Since the Opium War (1839-1842) with the Great Britain, China had signed unequal commercial treaties with the Great Britain, France, America and so on. The Eight Countries War in 1891 with Japan, England, Russia, America, German, France, Italy and Austria resulted in 1891 Treaty which shattered China’s finance and national dignity, and eventually led to the revolutionary overthrow of the Qing Dynasty and the establishment of Republic of China in 1911.

With the success of Meiji Restoration (1868-1912), the official nationalist project of westernization and modernization, Japan became the only country in East Asia that was free from further European invasion, and later an imperialist power itself. China was its first target. Fukuzawa Yukichi’s “De-Asianize”(1889) expressed Japan’s identification with European culture and its detachment from other Asian countries.

whole “culture” instead of in “*mere* technology” – machines, weapons, or industries. The notion of New Culture gradually emerged, based on a concept of “complete westernization” – i.e. in terms of values and thought. The critique of Chinese “substance”, and the distinction between substance and function itself, began to gain power over the old discourse. As such, “Chinese substance” appeared to withdraw as the horizon of “Western function” expanded. For those who argued against “complete westernization,” the principle of “Chinese substance, Western function” remained crucial for China’s cultural integrity, or “national soul.” For them the problem was how to interpret and rejuvenate Chinese “substance” – ranging from institutions to Confucian values, and to “spirituality.” Indeed, as I emphasize, the discursive field of New Culture must be traced back to the late Qing discourse about Chinese substance and Western function and its dynamic development. In chapter 2, I will further discuss this discursive movement that prepared the foundation for the formation of the notion of New Culture and New Writing. Now I should give the readers a basic picture of New Culture Movement and its inherent relation with the later multi-dimensional literary reform.

Doubtless the New Culture Movement in the 1910s to 1920’s was a project of complete westernization. The movement began in the late 1910’s. In 1915, Chen Du-Xiu (1879-1942) established the first journal to make the New Culture Movement its goal. The journal was *Youth*, later renamed *New Youth* 新青年. Later on other publications were founded: *Renaissance (New Tide)* 新潮 and *Weekly Reviews* 每週評論, just to name a few, that joined the New Culture Movement. *Renaissance* was a Beijing University student magazine founded in 1918. One of its founders, Luo Jia-Lun (1897-1969) wrote the famous Manifesto of May Fourth 1919. On May Fourth 1919,

over three thousand students from thirteen universities and colleges gathered in Beijing's Tiananmen Square to protest against the government's signing another unequal peace treaty with Japan. The May Fourth protest made such an impression in Chinese modern history, that it became synonymous with the New Culture Movement, and a symbol of intellectual struggle for political autonomy.

However, now when we talk about May Fourth movement we often think of the New Literature movement rather than the broader New Culture movement or the anti-colonial protest. It is because from very early on the Ideal of New Culture was connected to New Writing – not only New Literature but also a new written language. In 1917, pioneering colloquial poet Hu Shi (1891-1962), a philosophy professor in Beijing University, published his influential essay “A Modest Proposal for the Reform of Literature” in *New Youth*. It consists of eight cardinal tenets of literary reform:

1. “Do not neglect substance in writing”;
2. “Do not imitate the ancients”;
3. “Do not neglect grammar”;
4. “Do not moan without being sick”;
5. “Do not use stilted language and outworn poetic diction”;
6. “Do not use allusions”;
7. “Do not use parallelism”;
8. “Do not avoid colloquialism”.⁶

⁶ Hu, Shi. 胡適. 1917. “A Modest Proposal for the Reform of Literature” in *New Youth* 2(5). Pp, 1-11. <文學改良芻議>，《新青年》第二卷第五號。All translation is mine except when indicated otherwise.

These tenets are based upon a critique of classical writing, in terms of both *content and form*. The *New Youth* writers like Chen Du-Xiu and Hu Shi argued that “old literature, old politics and old ethics are a family. You cannot get rid of one without getting rid of the others”.⁷ [This wholist notion of culture will be further examined in chapter 2] Although colloquial literature can be traced back to the late nineteenth century, only in the late 1910’s did it become central to a grand project of modernity – the construction of a New Culture. In this project, Classic writing was considered not only an anachronism, but also the most concrete embodiment of the Chinese multi-dimensional malady. Some intellectuals like the eminent classic scholar Qian Xuan-Tong (1887-1939) even argued that Chinese script itself should be totally abolished and replaced by Esperanto or some European language.

It was hardly surprising that other intellectuals found the radical proposal of abolishing Chinese writing system to be hasty and tantamount to cultural suicide. As such, from 1918 to 1919, *a debate about abolishing classic writing* was instigated. Among those who opposed New Literature was the noted writer and translator Lin Shu (1852-1924), who did not know any foreign languages but nevertheless translated more than one hundred and seventy literary works to Chinese with the assistance of friends who knew the language and interpreted the stories for him. His famous translation of *La Dame aux Camelias* written by Alexandre Dumas Fils Jr. had an enormous impact on the new generation, because it for the first time introduced the “European sensation” into the Chinese imagination of romantic love. Lin was not a political conservative and

⁷ See Chen, Du-Xiu and Hu Shi. 陳獨秀與胡適. 1918. “Response to Readers” in *New*

wrote colloquial poetry in his earlier years. Nevertheless the radical proposition of abolishing classical writing and complete westernization frightened him as he saw it as a form of cultural suicide. In the *debate about abolishing classic writing*, the dichotomy between *westernization and cultural authenticity* remained the basic discursive axis, as we shall see in the late Qing discourse about Chinese substance and Western function.

In 1918, there was another debate about the differences between Chinese and Western cultures between the *New Youth* and *Eastern Miscellany* 東方雜誌 writers. The *Eastern Miscellany* was established by Du Ia-Quan and Qian Zhi-Xiu in 1904 and had also been a progressive intellectual journal. They critiqued Chen Du-Xiu and Hu Shi for their hasty negation of Chinese culture and their “utilitarian” interpretation of Western culture. In 1921, Wu Mi and Mei Guang-Di established *The Critical Review* 學衡 (literally means *Learning Balance*), and launched another attack on the New Cultural Movement. This time it was the *debate about the preservation of Chinese culture*. The motto of *Learning Balance* was “Illuminate national essence. Fuse new knowledge.” As the *Eastern Miscellany* writers, they were worried by the radical proposition of eliminating traditional culture. They argued that cultural preservation was not an obstacle, but rather a national foundation for forging a new culture. In this sense, they provided a new interpretation of “Chinese substance, Western function.” For this group, however, western “substance” was to be fused into the Chinese substance to rejuvenate it. In 1919 the Chinese Communist Party was founded. Chen Du-Xiu, who established *New Youth*, the first journal of The New Culture Movement, was among its

Youth 5(4). Pp, 432-433. <通信：回應讀者>，《新青年》第五卷第四號。P, 433.

founders. In 1920, *New Youth* became the official newsletter of the CCP. The unresolved problem concerning westernization and cultural authenticity continued to stir the Chinese intelligentsia.

The New Culture movement ended with a political revolution. It seems the ideal of New Culture never really achieved its goal. Nevertheless, ever since then, the debate about westernization appeared to be an every decade event. In 1934, Chen Xu-Jing published “For Complete Westernization”, and later in 1935 ten professors published “Cultural Construction based on Chinese Standard.” In the 1940’s the Japanese invasion and the civil war between the Communist Party and the National Party interrupted the intellectual discussion. After World War II, China entered a new era of socialism with the regime of the Communist Party. The National Party withdrew to Taiwan in 1949 with a group of intellectuals from May Fourth generation, including Hu Shi and Luo Jia-Lun. The fact that May Fourth was officially named *Youth Day* in China (1949) and *Literature Day* in Taiwan (1950) showed it was a landmark in Chinese modern history across political barriers. In a *Chinese-Western cultural debate* in 1960’s, Taiwan carried on the unresolved issue of The New Culture Movement. In China, the “May Fourth spirit” and Tiananmen Square have become symbols for intellectuals’ struggle for freedom, democracy and progress. During the Cultural Revolution of 1966 to 1969, Mao Zedong interpreted May Fourth as a “cultural revolution” and claimed to carry the May Fourth spirit to the extreme.⁸ After the 1989 Tiananmen incident, intellectuals’

⁸ For the comparison of May Fourth Movement and Cultural Revolution, see Meisner, Maurice. 1972. “Cultural Inconoclam, Nationalism, and Internationalism in the May Fourth Movement” in *Reflection on the May Fourth Movement: A Symposium*. 1972.

reflection and critique of the Cultural Revolution constantly refers back to the significance of May Fourth or The New Culture Movement.

As we see earlier, from the very beginning, *the critique of language* has been at the center of this century-long debate. For over two thousand years till 1905, Chinese official-literati were selected by national examination based on literary skills. The literati had to learn to write in classical form and memorize the orthodox classical texts. In the 1910's and 1920's, both the content and form of Chinese script came under critical scrutiny. In the New Culture movement, the orthodox Confucian texts were seen as a carrier of traditional values that legitimized political absolutism and the "feudal" order; the anachronism and institutionalized complexity of classical writing were criticized. The structure of Chinese writing system itself -- especially the classical Chinese, *Wen-Yan* as a literary medium -- was also criticized. As against these traditional texts, New Writing is an integral part of The New Culture Movement. In terms of *content*, new literature is related to social criticism and realism as opposed to old literature's affirmation of the "feudal" order. In terms of *form*, new literature is written in colloquial as opposed to classical Chinese; "grammar" in the European sense is introduced as a logical way to make a sentence. Chinese script is critiqued for its "lack" of grammar, which is considered to mean the lack of logic and abstract reason, and therefore a hindrance to *scientific* thinking. As a matter of fact, some advocates of New Writing even went so far to suggest the total abolition of the Chinese writing

Edited By Benjamin I. Schwartz. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. Pp, 15-22.

system as a whole. For them, Chinese written language as a literary *and* thinking medium was completely unqualified for the modern and scientific spirit.

The fact that both Taiwan and Mainland China under different political regimes have carried out the official literary reform – the *Pin-Yin* system or other Romanization methods, teaching colloquial writing in schools, and the simplification of characters – shows how crucial the critique of language has been for the Chinese project of *modernity*. This project has been a long process of constructing a new people through literary revolution. As early as 1902, Liang Qi-Chao, who was the forerunner and mentor for the New Culture generation, already proposed that a “new literature” is a mental prerequisite for a New People. In 1902, when he was still in exile in Japan, he launched simultaneously two journals *New Fiction* and *New People*. He said: “to renew people’s heart and minds and remold their character, we must first renovate fiction.”⁹ The May Fourth generation carried on this unfinished project in the New Culture Movement, and in the New Literature Movement.

As I emphasize, the purpose of this study is elaborate a historically specific non-western project of modernity in Chinese multidimensional literary reform. In so doing, I also want to shed new light on the *dichotomy between westernization and cultural authenticity* which has been so central to the century-long debates of Chinese modernity, as well as to many other non-western cultural situations of postcoloniality. It is necessary to examine the discursive practices that sustain and elaborate this opposition

⁹ Quoted in Schwarcz, Vera. 1986. *The Chinese Enlightenment: Intellectuals and the*

in the critique of Chinese writing and culture. The deconstruction of this opposition has already begun to be theorized in *postcolonial theory*. Although China was never colonized in the traditional sense, the situation it faced after its early century encounter with the “western” powers can be described as a postcolonial situation – specially the shaky foundation of subjectivity and the hybridizing effort to forge a new Chinese subject. Here I will put emphasis on hybridity as a cultural situation rather than Homi Bhabha’s notion of “act of hybridity” as a postcolonial desire of mimicry.¹⁰ The *dichotomy between westernization and cultural authenticity* is the *marking and masking* of the struggle of Chinese modernity, as well as for other countries in postcolonial situations. It appears to be an obstinate opposition which always returns and fails any efforts to overcome it. If we want to discover other discursive strategies, and move forward to the future, it is necessary to break through this dead-end dichotomy which has dominated the discussion of alternative modernity for so long, as we see in the case of Chinese linguistic modernity. We need to examine the *actual* discursive practices that negotiate a new modern Chinese subject – I mean those *molecular* discursive practices which tend to be overlooked or reduced to *molar dualism* in their own discursive field. These practices are “molecular” because they move *below* the apparently binary oppositions and thereby communicate *across* the given boundaries between “Western Culture” and “Chinese Culture.” I will examine these practices in chapters 5, 6, and 7.

Legacy of the May Fourth Movement of 1919. University of California Press. P, 33.

¹⁰ See Bhabha, Homi K. 1994. “Signs Taken For Wonders” in *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge. Pp. 102-122.

3. A Methodological Note on Positionality

In the following sections I want to discuss the theoretical significance of the Chinese project of linguistic modernity as a historically specific effort of “artificial evolution” in the age of western colonialism. This theoretical consideration may also apply to other postcolonial cases. However, it should be noted that it is my pre-understanding of the case that forms the foundation of my theoretical appropriation, not vice versa. This point is of great methodological import because the subject-matter itself, especially when it is a quasi-theoretical effort of cultural construction as in my case here, will to a certain degree intervene with the theory the researcher chooses to appropriate and further elaborate. It is imperative to remember that theory is not neutral – in terms of value and position. Positionality is a theoretical issue because the subject position of a researcher is irreducible to her theoretical position. In social science, a “theory” often has the theorist’s subject-position embedded in it. As a matter of fact, sociological theory, especially classical theory, as we know, is based on European experiences of modernity, just as the theory we now call “postcolonial theory” is originally based on the historically specific experience of postcolonial experiences, mostly Indian and postcolonial exile experiences. The positionality of theory, of course, does not mean that it is absolutely relative to its original experience. Absolute relativism is even more dangerous than naïve universalism. But it does mean that we have to be cautious when we talk about the applicability of theory. Indeed, any grand effort at theoretical application is suspect.

As I emphasize, my purpose is to elaborate the Chinese project of linguistic modernity in the ideals of New Culture and New Writing. Here I must argue that the

conventional sociological theory of modernity is too Eurocentric to be applicable. On the other hand, postcolonial theory as we now know is not totally applicable either. It is at some intersection of these two theoretical fields that I will have to find a suitable space of theoretical negotiation.

4. Chinese Postcoloniality: the Tension between Epistemic Violence and Active Worlding

With “western” capitalism/imperialism expanding since the sixteenth century, the “non-western” world has been forced into the project of modernity. As Marx points out in *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848), the European bourgeoisie “has through its exploitation of the world-market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country”¹¹ This cosmopolitan character manifests itself not only in economic processes, but also in processes of societal institutions and cultural notions. For the Asian countries, as well as other non-western countries, the twentieth century was one of confrontation with “western” powers, that is, European countries expanding their “world-markets” through military, political and cultural means. The violent encounter consisted of forced commerce, bloody wars, military occupation, and a serious and substantial interruption of social orders and cultural traditions. In other words, we have to consider “violence of thought” as well as violence of war, economics and politics. It is in part through the violence of thought

¹¹ In Tucker, Robert C. ed. 1978. *The Marx-Engels Reader*. Second edition. New York: Norton. P, 476.

accompanying the material violence that the non-western world was thrown into the project of modernity and saw it as the only way to survive.

Postcolonial theorist Gayatri Spivak describes this form of violence as “epistemic violence”.¹² In the postcolonial situation, *epistemic violence* is subversive in nature. That is to say, it opens up a new space for negotiating and reconstructing new thought by destroying its victim’s traditional way of thought. Therefore, Spivak emphasizes that epistemic violence is an “enabling violence”.¹³ It forces the non-western subject to open a space allowing “new things” to come into being. This goes beyond the conventional opposition between traditional and modern, which is actually too crude to grasp the subtle movement of bring forth new things in the (post)colonial situation. As Homi Bhabha argues, the important question is how “newness comes into the world’ through the ‘foreign’ element that is introduced into a culture and thereby reveals the “interstitial” of the “original”, and becomes the “unstable element of linkage”, the “indeterminate temporality of the in-between”.¹⁴ In other words, with the violent introduction or imposition of “foreign” element, “a culture” is no longer a smooth space. The intrusion of foreign elements breaks the original cultural surface, and creates a

¹² See Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 1996. *The Spivak Reader*. Eds. By D. Landry and G. Maclean. Routledge. Pp, 128-129. According to Micheal Foucault’s definition, “episteme” is knowledge’s “conditions of possibility” or the “space of order” through which knowledge is constituted at a given time; see Foucault, Michel. 1970. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. New York: Vintage Books, p. xxii.

¹³ See Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 1996. *The Spivak Reader*. Eds. By D. Landry and G. Maclean. Routledge. P, 19.

¹⁴ Bhabha, Homi K. 1994. *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge. P, 227.

problematic space for bringing forth new ideas and new things. As a matter of fact, culture is *never* a smooth space, and only appears so with the imposition of the official cultural policy, or dogma. In the early twentieth century, the apparently smooth cultural space of China was drastically interrupted by the “foreign” elements imported from Europe and Japan mostly by those bi-lingual intellectuals who had studied abroad and worried about their mother country’s future.

In the encounter with the “foreign” elements, however, there was already a process of transformation, or a “chain of transmutation” involved, to borrow Bruno Latour’s description of how scientists see “nature.”¹⁵ The smooth space called Chinese Culture was constructed against another constructed smooth space called Western Culture. In their encounter with foreign elements and their rethinking of “traditional” elements, Chinese intellectuals constructed these two molar homogeneous spaces *in order to be able to shift their subject-positions* back and forth, and to negotiate a New Culture. Perhaps this binary strategy was necessary at that particular time. However, we will have to deconstruct this opposition and clarify the dynamic movement of the molecular discursive practices involved.

Let us return to the historical specificity of Chinese postcoloniality. Although China was not formally colonized, it was nearly carved up by the most powerful imperialist countries in the world, and thus it was rightly described as a “semicolony” and a “subcolony” (cf. Shih, 2001: 31-1)¹⁶. On the other hand, Chinese revolutionaries

¹⁵ See Latour, Bruno. 1999. *Pandora’s Hope*. Chapter 2 “Circulating Reference: Sampling the Soil in the Amaozn Forest.” Harvard University Press.

¹⁶ As Shih points out, the term “semicolony” was used by Mao Zedong and other

were able to overthrow the rule of Qing Dynasty, and establish the Republic of China, a political regime of *democracy*, in 1911, when China was still under the threat of multiple imperialist invasion. These factors complicate the definition of China's situation: it was semi-colonial and sub-colonial, but also a new independent "democratic" regime, at least in theory. Here I choose to describe China in and after the period of the New Culture Movement as a *postcolonial situation* to highlight the *shifting subject-positionality* of the Chinese intellectuals involved in the project and debates. I make no attempt to use the "postcolonial" as a form of historical periodization, which would be problematic at least in China's case if not in general. Perhaps it would be a good idea to follow Stuart Hall's description of the status of postcolonial as the *episteme-in-information*, inspired by Derrida who presents the deconstruction of philosophy as the episteme at the limit.¹⁷ In China's case, it seems to me that the field of discourse around the period of the New Culture Movement was exactly an *episteme-in-information*, in and through which Chinese intellectuals struggled to come up with a nationalist project of modernity by *shifting their subject-position*. Epistemic violence is a theoretical concept, which by no means defends imperialism or colonial regimes, but aims to provide a subtle framework to deal with an inevitable situation of *postcoloniality* – that is, the shattering ground and shifting positionality of postcolonial subjectivity which demand constant negotiation, deconstruction and reconstruction. The

Marxists since the 1920's and 1930's, and "subcolony" was coined by Sun Yat-sen, the founder of Chinese National Party and Republic of China.

¹⁷ Hall, Stuart. 1996. "When was 'the post-colonial'? Thinking at the Limit" in *The Post-Colonial Question*. Eds. Chamber, Iain and Lidia Curti. London and New York: Routledge. Pp 242-260. P, 255.

shifting positionality of postcolonial subjectivity indicates a *coercive situation of the epistemic violence brought forth by the collision between western forces and Chinese order*, rather than a free floating capacity of some “postcolonial subjectivity”. In the early twentieth century, at the time of Chinese Literary reform and the New Culture Movement, this form of enabling epistemic violence had an enormous impact. The debate between westernization and Chinese cultural authenticity itself exercised the power of active construction that went beyond this opposition – as we will see in the actual molecular discursive practices.

Here I want to add another crucial concept “worlding” – that is an active effort of artificial evolution in the Chinese project of linguistic modernity. Following Spivak’s use of the Heideggerean notion of *worlding* as bringing forth a world, I argue that Chinese New Cultural Movement as a project of artificial evolution is an active effort to worlding a modern China. In “Three Women’s Texts and a Critique of Imperialism”, Spivak deconstructs the operation of the “worlding” of today’s “the Third World” in the canonized feminist text of *Jane Eyre*.¹⁸ She reveals how those parts of the world now known as “the Third World” *were brought forth* into being, in part, through English literature in the age of western colonialism. In this study, I argue that in the efforts of the New Culture Movement, we can see the operation of an *active worlding of a modern China*. According to my analysis of the New Culture Movement discourse and related debates, *worlding* a modern China basically means bringing forth China as a new world,

¹⁸ Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 1986. “Three Women’s Texts and a Critique of Imperialism.” In “*Race*”, *Writing and Difference*. 1986. The University of Chicago Press. P, 263.

and into *the* modern World. *Worlding* a modern China also means rebuilding Chinese subjectivity within a certain “worldview”, seeking to relocate China as a modern nation into the stage of “World History”. The aim of the New Cultural Movement was to forge a “modern”, “progressive” and “scientific” agency of thought and action. Indeed, worlding a new China was the common goal of the New Culture Movement activists as well as the “cultural authenticity” proponents who argued against “complete westernization” but for “worldization” (世界化 *Shi-Jie-Hua*). Their difference lies in the definition of “worldization” and the strategies of achieving these goals. I will further discuss this point in chapter 5.

5. Discontinuous Discourse and Deconstructive Reading

Within a basic postcolonial framework, I want to insert a Foucauldian notion of *discontinuous discourse*. This concept has a theoretical affinity with the notion of a violent epistemic rupture of the postcolonial situation. I find the notion of discontinuous discourse especially useful for my study here because the discourse of the New Culture was by no means a coherent one, but actually presented an *inner discontinuity* (more than a radical discontinuity with the preceding generation, as the New Cultural generation presumed). I suggest that it is in this inner discontinuity that we can find the molecular discursive practices that would help overcome the unproductive opposition between westernization and cultural authenticity. This overcoming can not due to any individual person’s effort, no matter how important or insightful that person was, but only to the movement of these molecular discursive practices. Here Foucault’s discussion of “discontinuity” and “discursive practice” is very helpful because it points

to the operations of the *impersonal* discursive formation that I would like to engage in this study.

As against the traditional history of thought, “discontinuity” is a *methodological* concept as well as a descriptive one. Foucault points out that “discontinuity” has always been an assumption in the practice of the historian but was never made explicit and “positive” until the emergence of what he calls the “new history.”

The notion of discontinuity is a paradoxical one: because it is both an instrument and an object of research; because it divides up the field of which it is the effect. ... One of the most essential features of the new history is probably this displacement of the discontinuous: its transference from the obstacle to the work itself; its integration into the discourse of the historian, where it no longer plays the role of external condition that must be reduced, but that of a *working concept*; and therefore *the inversion of signs* by which it is no longer the negative of the historical reading ... but the positive element that determines its object and validates its analysis.¹⁹ [italics added]

The inversion of “discontinuity” into a working concept, as I would like to emphasize, leads to a *molecular* notion of discursive event or practice. By foregrounding the notions of discontinuity, threshold, and decentring, Foucault’s project of the archaeology of knowledge turns its back on the great themes of traditional history of ideas: genesis, continuity and totality – all based on the anthropocentric presupposition

¹⁹ Foucault, Michel. 1972. *The Archaeology of Knowledge and The Discourse of*

of the sovereignty of the subject.²⁰ In contrast, the archaeology of knowledge does not try to restore any origin, fixed unity or some “hidden cultural totality,” but to define discourses in their specificity. It suggests we suspend the supposed unity and continuity of discourse, and look into the necessity of certain statements/events and how they operate in the field of discursive events. As Foucault puts it, this is a “project of a *pure description of discursive events*” which poses a different question: “how is it that one particular statement appears rather than another?”²¹ However, archaeology does not try to simply repeat what has been said. It does not try to “efface itself”.²² It does not pretend to reach an identity with what has been said. This kind of analysis of discourse is necessary a “rewriting” – “a regulated transformation of what has already been written”.²³ As such, the analysis of the *discontinuous* help to produce a map of the past, and allows us to move forward towards the future, not based on totalization, the impact of individual geniuses, or any linear story-line, but on a group of statements belonging to the same impersonal, anonymous discursive formation. Therefore, Foucault defines discursive practice as follows:

What we have called “discursive practice” can now be defined more

Language. New York: Pantheon Books. P, 9.

²⁰ See Foucault, Michel. 1972. *The Archaeology of Knowledge and The Discourse of Language*. New York: Pantheon Books, p, 12, 138; and Foucault, Michel. 1970. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. New York: Vintage Books.

²¹ See Foucault, Michel. 1972. *The Archaeology of Knowledge and The Discourse of Language*. New York: Pantheon Books. P, 26-27.

²² See Foucault, Michel. 1972. P. 139.

²³ See Foucault, Michel. 1972. P. 140.

precisely. It must not be confused with the expressive operation by which an individual formulates an idea, a desire, an image; nor with the “competence” of a speaking subject when he constructs grammatical sentences; it is a body of anonymous, historical rules, always determined in the time and space that have defined a given period, and for a given social, economic, geographical, or linguistic areas, the conditions of operation of the enunciative function.²⁴

In this definition of discursive practice, Foucault highlights the impersonal forces at play in the discursive field that determine the form of subjectivation/subjectation, not the other way around. Put in the context of the epistemic rupture of the postcolonial situation, where the apparent smooth cultural space is violently interrupted by “foreign” elements, the analysis of these impersonal discursive practices and subindividual forces marking historical discontinuities becomes even more relevant. It was those forces by which Chinese intellectuals were overwhelmed that brought forth a new “regime of statements” which helped shape the discursive formation of the New Culture Movement. In this process, pretty much characterized by what Hall called an “episteme-in-formation”, the opposition between the West and Chinese, or that between Occidental and Oriental, has played the role of the discursive axis, and, as I emphasize, a framework that both enables and restricts the ongoing debates.

This leads us to Derridean deconstruction, especially as used in postcolonial theorist Spivak’s application. According to Spivak, deconstruction as a method involves

²⁴ See Foucault, Michel. 1972. P. 117.

“tracking the *rhetorical maneuvers* performed *by words*”,²⁵ such as Derrida’s tracking of “supplement” in Jean-Jacques Rousseau or “pharmakos” in Plato. In this sense, deconstruction maps the trace structure of discourse where the “performer” is not any speaking subject, but certain *words*, or Foucauldian statements/events. Derrida himself, of course, claims the task of deconstruction to be “impossible”, and declares that deconstruction is *not* a method because it “does not settle for methodological procedures, it opens up a passageway.” As he notes, “Deconstruction is inventive or it is nothing at all”.²⁶ Derrida’s claim against methodology is more a philosophical position than a factual announcement. What he is arguing against is a certain form of scientism rather than “method” itself. Through “opening up a passageway” and tracking the trace structure of discourse, deconstruction has been used as a method of critical reading, by Derrida himself and others. Deconstruction has to be *inventive* and shakes the system from within, by problematizing, reversing and displacing the fundamental opposition upon which the system is dependent. Spivak calls this practice the “reversal-displacement morphology of deconstruction.”²⁷ Deconstructive reading draws our attention to the *play of differences*, or the Derridean *differance*, that renders any

²⁵ See Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, 1999, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*. Harvard University Press. Pp, 423-424. Italics added.

²⁶ Cited in Attridge, Derek. 1994. "Singularities, Responsibilities: Derrida, Deconstruction and Literary Criticism" in *Critical Encounters: Reference and Responsibility in Deconstructive Writing* ed. Cathy Caruth and Deborah Esch. Rutgers University Press. Pp, 109-111.

²⁷ Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 1996. *The Spivak Reader*. Eds. By D. Landry and G. Maclean. Routledge. P, 62.

conceptual process possible.

Both Foucault's notion of discourse and Derridean deconstruction are about the production of "truth." Discourses are configurations of power/knowledge, organizing the existence and reproduction of society, and the formation of subjection/subjectivation, in Foucault's case, that is the constitution of the modern western subject. Deconstruction as critical reading problematizes the axiomatic opposition organizing the discourse, and aims to demonstrate the impossibility of any truth claim without the temporal and spatial play of differences circulating in meaning. Or, as Deleuze and Guattari point out, signs do not signify a thing, but rather consist of "regimes of statements"; they are "signs of deterritorialization and reterritorialization" of social space.²⁸ Regarding the situation of Chinese postcoloniality in the early twentieth century when Chinese literary reform and New Cultural Movement aimed to deconstruct the old identity-formaton, and construct a new subjectivity, the Foucauldian notion of discourse, along with the Derridean deconstruction, serves as a useful analytical framework. They draw our attention to the operational process of heterogeneous discursive elements and the movement of displaced axiomatic oppositions.

I argue that in the postcolonial situation, this method of deconstructing reading can draw our attention to the play of differences of the elements from the axiomatic opposition between the "Occidental" and the "Oriental" – as in this case. More importantly, the molecular discursive practices of the New Culture Movement that

²⁸ See Deleuze G. and Felix Guttari. 1987. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and*

constantly circulated in its apparent binary framework were deconstructive in themselves. On the one hand, these practices attempted to deconstruct and displace the fundamental opposition of its previous generation – the *Ti/Yong* distinction (substance versus function). On the other hand, these practices constantly debunked other binary oppositions’ discursive instability. In the discursive practices of the New Culture Movement, I expect to find the operational processes under which *the regimes of statements constituting the sign of modernity* deterritorialize, reterritorialize, and map a new project of modern China. In other words, how was the *sign of modernity* rewritten in this discursive formation? In the following sections, I present my analysis of the basic discursive themes of the New Culture movement. These themes constitute the basic discursive formation of Chinese postcoloniality, and will serve as a conceptual background for the succeeding chapters about the discursive field of New Culture and ideologies of New Writing.

6. The Discursive Formation of Chinese Postcoloniality

There were at least three main discursive strategies operating and overlapping throughout the New Culture movement. Each strategy involved a certain shift of subject-positionality, and framed the on-going discursive movement of statements. First of all, there was an internalized, reflexive “Orientalism” in which some members of Chinese intelligentsia detached themselves from the Chinese context, trying to shift their self-position to the “outside” of the “East”, and to the progressive “West,” only in

Schizophrenia. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. P, 67.

order to return and diagnose Chinese civilization from this new vantage point.

According to Edward Said, Orientalism is “a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between ‘the Orient’ and (most of the time) ‘the Occident.’”²⁹ Orientalism is a discursive strategy that operates under the “umbrella of Western hegemony”³⁰, which has been *globalized* at an ever greater velocity since the eighteenth century. Orientalism, as a style of thought with its inherent tendency to essentialize, became available as a discursive strategy for many non-western intellectuals. As Partha Chatterjee points out, the problematic of non-western nationalist thought is exactly the reverse of Orientalism. The “object” is still the “Oriental,” only now it is not a passive, but a participating Orientalism.³¹ The Chinese intelligentsia’s attempt to shift their subject position to the “West” as a positionality of radical self-critiquing virtually produced the effect of Orientalism, because their diagnosis of Chinese culture/writing was based on the radical wholistic opposition between “Chinese culture” and “Western culture”.

Secondly, there was a symbiotic “Occidentalism” in which the “West” was constructed as a homogeneous whole, as China’s “Other” – a threatening but progressive Object of emulation. In this discourse, the Chinese intelligentsia’s subject-position shifts to the borderline of “East” and “West”: in order to diagnose and face the “East”, one must first define and face the “West.” The effect of Occidentalism is the

²⁹ Said, Edward W. 1978. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books. P, 2.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p, 6-7.

³¹ Chatterjee, Partha. 1986. *Nationalist Thought and Discourse*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. P, 38.

uneven correlative of Orientalism. The categories of the Occidental and the Oriental cultures form a hierarchical dichotomy. The slant of this correlation always runs the risk of collapsing into the practical use of Occidentalism as an equivocal ideal to self-criticize Chinese society.

Thirdly, there was a discourse of “Cosmopolitanism” based upon the belief in universal evolutionism. As I argue above, Chinese intellectuals consciously recognized their aim as “worlding” a modern China, seeking to bring up a new China as a new world, and move China forward onto the stage of World History. This cosmopolitanism manifested an ambiguous intimate relation to the hierarchical dichotomy between the Occidental and the Oriental. Cosmopolitanism and Occidentalism seemed to collapse into each other, when *becoming more like the Occidental* was equated with *becoming a proper member of the modern world*. By doing so, nevertheless, the boundaries between China and West start to blur even when the dichotomization remained a basic discursive strategy. The Chinese intelligentsia, employing the fashionable notion of evolutionism, launched in the multi-dimensional literary reform and the New Culture Movement a project of artificial *creative evolution*, as I would like to call, borrowing Henri Bergson’s term.

According to Bergson, the process of evolution is neither mechanical nor teleological, but creative; “duration means invention, the creation of forms, the continual elaboration of the absolute new.”³² Evolution is creative, because it proceeds

³² See Bergson, Henri. 1911. *Creative Evolution*. Tr. By Arthur Mitchell. New York: Henry Holt and Company. P, 12.

via *indetermination*, which means hesitation and choices.³³

Heredity does not only transmit characters; it transmits also the impetus in virtue of which the characters are modified, and this impetus is vitality itself.³⁴

The aim of an “artificial” creative evolution would be to go beyond the problem of “heredity” (linear genealogy), and to enter the field of “event” (affective bodies, intensities, transversal communications that move *below* and *across* individual entities/subjects). Post-structuralist theorist Gilles Deleuze applies Bergson’s notion of creative evolution to social space and asks, is it this indetermination or “hesitation” that allows men “with a leap, to break the circle of closed societies?”³⁵ This Deleuzian-Bergsonian *leap*, as I suggest, is an effort of social, artificial creative evolution.

In the early twentieth century, Chinese intellectuals were thrown into an intense moment of indetermination. Some of them felt that their best if not their only choice was to take a *leap*, with the New Culture Movement, and to break the circle of tradition. However, this path-breaking project of creative evolution tended to be *enclosed* by an imperative nationalist mode of thinking. Above all, worlding a new China as an emerging modern *nation* in the World History was the desire underlying the efforts of this artificial creative evolution. This strong desire for nationalist enclosure seems to contradict the Deleuzian-Bergsonian notion of *creative evolution* which accentuates the

³³ Bergson, Henri. 1991. *Matter and Memory*. Translated by N.M.Paul and W.S.Palmer. New York: Zone Books. Pp, 41-44.

³⁴ See Bergson, Henri. 1911. *Creative Evolution*. p. 232.

³⁵ Deleuze, Gilles. 1991. *Bergsonism*. New York: Zone Books. P, 109.

opening up of the given enclosures. However, as I emphasize in the notion of molecular discursive practices, it was through the molecular translational communication across the given enclosed systems like “Chinese Culture” or “Western Culture”, that the ideal of New Culture as a collective nationalist project of modernity actually operated. This point will be clear in the following chapters.

Based on the above analysis of the main discursive strategies of the New Culture Movement, this study involves the following theoretical concerns. These concerns have been raised by postcolonial theory, and often were the very concerns of the New Cultural Movement itself. They are: 1. The rewriting of the “modernity project”; 2. The appropriation and repetition of “Orientalism”; 3. The effective employment of “Chinese prejudice”; 4. The space of writing a “postcolonial subject” and the question of “cultural translation.” In the rest of this chapter I will discuss these theoretical issues in relation to the notions of New Culture and New Writing which, as I pointed out, served as the basic ideals of Chinese modernity project in the early twentieth century. This theoretical discussion will inform the actual discursive investigation in the following chapters of this study.

6.1. Rewriting of modernity

There have been extensive theoretical debates concerning the notions of modernity and postmodernity. It has been argued that these notions are best understood as discursive forms instead of as periodization. That is, the question of whether “we” are living in a modern or postmodern world is relatively irrelevant. As Jurgen Habermas points out, the project of modernity begotten of European Enlightenment contains a

normative content. The young Hegel referred to this as an “ethical totality.”³⁶ Anthony Giddens treats this as the organizing principles on the institutional level, what he calls “institutional reflexivity” or “institutionalized reflexivity.”³⁷ This totalizing, normative project has been exported to the whole world through European imperialism and Christian missionary work – the “civilizing mission.” Along with many colonial and postcolonial nationalist movements, the New Culture Movement embraced the project of modernity as the only way, paradoxically but not without good reason, to resist European imperialism. Therefore, as postcolonial studies have pointed out, a Eurocentric notion of modernity is insufficient and inappropriate for fully understanding the postcolonial appropriation of the modernity project. As historian Tani E. Barlow suggests, the writing of non-European modernity often is in need of a framework of “colonial modernity.”³⁸ The purpose of “colonial modernity” as a theoretical framework therefore is to open up a space of historical writing, drawing attention to the historical specificity of non-European colonized experiences, and putting the European concept of modernity into question. Although China has never been fully occupied and colonized, it has nevertheless experienced a strong impact of the European colonialism, in terms of both institutions and thought.

In the discursive practices of the New Culture Movement and the multi-

³⁶ Habermas, Jürgen. 1991. *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. The MIT Press Cambridge. P, 337.

³⁷ Giddens, Anthony. 1991. *Modernity and Self-Identity*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. P, 2, 20.

³⁸ See Barlow, Tani. 1997. “Introduction” for *Formations of Colonial Modernity in East Asia* ed. by Tani Barlow. Duke University Press. P, 6.

dimensional literary reform, a project of modernity was negotiated, as a nationalist project attempting to transform China from the “traditional” to the “modern”, by hybridizing heterogeneous elements. “Cultural translation” played a crucial role here. One of the important modern ideas is that of “science”. As with many translated terms, the Chinese translation of “science”, *Ke-Xue* 科學, borrowed directly from the Japanese translation of European ideas. Meanwhile, the traditional academic term for investigation and application *Ge Wu Zhi Zhi* 格物致知, a key concept taken from *Li Xue* 理學 (literally, studies of principles) flowering in the Song and Ming dynasties, was used side by side with *ke-xue*. The noted scholar Yan Fu (1853-1921) who translated eight important works of western sociology and philosophy, including works of Herbert Spencer and John Stuart Mill, translated Henry Huxley’s *Evolution and Ethics* into Chinese as *Tianyan Lun* 天演論 (*On Heavenly Evolution*)(1895-6). In his translation and interpretation, the order of natural evolution is superimposed by a higher order of a “heavenly evolution” as an ultimate constancy which combined the two notions of competitive struggle and natural selection.³⁹ As such, the notion of science was connected back to the task of national survival which in turn was interpreted as a necessity and imperative dictated by heavenly evolution. Therefore, worlding a modern China was a project of *artificial evolution* imposed by the *heavenly evolution*. One of its purposes was to produce in Chinese subjects an “evolutionist attitude to life” capable of

³⁹ See Wang, Hui. 1997. “The Fate of ‘Mr. Science’ in China: The Concept of Science and Its Application in Modern Chinese Thought” in *Formations of Colonial Modernity in East Asia* ed. by Tanie Barlow. Pp, 21-79. Duke University Press. Pp, 43-44.

enacting social reform. “Action is human nature, struggle is self-defense. It [struggle] is the most effective method to avoid danger – develop skills – reform society.”⁴⁰

In the early twentieth century Chinese notions of science, science and politics were intertwined. The relationship itself constituted the early modern Chinese project of modernity. For example, one of the earliest proponents of scientific method, pioneer Colloquial poet, Hu Shi coined the slogan “investigate problems, import theories, systemize traditional thought, and remake civilization”.⁴¹ “Science” was proposed as a new attitude to life and the spirit of new culture. Since the Chinese language was diagnosed as “not” scientific enough or even as *anti*-scientific, one of the key questions of the New Culture Movement was: *how do we reform the Chinese language and make it more suitable for scientific way of thinking?* The effort to disenchant the traditional values and the tone of realism in the New Literature Movement echoed this notion of science as a key to become modern.

Like that of modernity, the concept of postmodernity contains a normative project, namely to critique the authoritarian danger of the modernity narrative. As Jean-Francois Lyotard argues in *The Postmodern Condition*, the grand historical narrative of modernity so optimistically embraced by Habermas has broken down, and in any case is inappropriate or even dangerous as a political blueprint. For Lyotard, the goal of

⁴⁰ Wang, Xiang-Guang. 王星拱. 1919. “On Strugglism” in *New Youth* 7(5). Pp, 1-8.
 <奮鬥主義之一個解釋>，《新青年》第七卷第五號。P, 7.

⁴¹ Hu, Shi. 胡適. 1919. “The Meaning of a New Thought” in *New Youth* 7(1). Pp, 5-12.
 <新思潮的意義>，《新青年》第七卷第一號。P, 5.

political dialogue should not be consensus, but dissension.⁴² Later on Lyotard proposes the notion of “rewriting modernity” instead of postmodernity, because “neither modernity nor postmodernity can be identified as clearly circumscribed historical entities”.⁴³ As such, I argue that, in the postcolonial situation, *the project of modernity is always already being rewritten*. In the processes of these multiple rewritings, the sign of modernity is the terrain of a power struggle. As Russian literary critic V.N. Volosinov argues in *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, in the sign existence is “not merely reflected but *refracted*.” The refraction effect of the sign is determined by class struggle. That is to say, different and competitive social orientations and values intersect in the sign.⁴⁴ Similarly, in the postcolonial situation, the sign of modernity is a site of a power struggle among different values and orientations. As I point out in the section on the Foucauldian notion of discontinuous discourse, in the actual molecular discursive practices which negotiated the notions of New Culture and New Writing, the sign of modernity is always at the center of this mapping of a new China.

6.2. Repetition of Orientalism

Another theoretical issue this study intends to tackle is “Orientalism.” In his now

⁴² See Lyotard, J-F. 1984. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Manchester: Manchester University Press. P, 66.

⁴³ See Lyotard, J-F. 1991. *The Inhuman: Reflection on Time*. Cambridge: Polity Press. P, 25.

⁴⁴ Volosinov, V.N. 1973. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Harvard University Press. P, 23.

canonized work *Orientalism*, Said uses the Foucauldian notion of discourse – that is, the configurations of power/knowledge that organizes the existence and reproduction of society – to point out how European thought (literature, philosophy and academic Orientalism) constructed a mute “Orient” as Europe’s “Other” against which Europe defined itself.⁴⁵ For Said, Orientalism is an “idea,” which simultaneously misrepresents and constructs the Orient. Some argue that in his concept of Orientalism, Said fails either to distinguish between or to articulate the relationship between misrepresentation and fiction. For example, ethnographer James Clifford critiques Said for not paying enough attention to the procedures of representation. He asks Said: “Should criticism work to counter sets of culturally produced images like Orientalism with more ‘authentic’ or more ‘human’ representations? Or, if criticism must struggle against the procedures of representation itself, how is it to begin?”⁴⁶ To be fair, Said rejects the idea that there is an “Oriental essence” to be correctly represented. Following Roland Barthes, he emphasizes that every representation serves a specific purpose and every representational “formation” is also a “deformation”.⁴⁷ Using Foucauldian “discourse”, Said is struggling against the procedures of representation itself. He nevertheless constantly reproaches the west for its “*misrepresentation*” of the Orient, or to be precise, of Islam, and suggests that the only alternative is a “correct representation”.⁴⁸ Perhaps,

⁴⁵ Said, Edward W. 1978. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books. P, 1, 5.

⁴⁶ See Clifford, James. 1980. “Review of Orientalism”, in *History and Theory*, 19:204-223 (1980). P, 208.

⁴⁷ Said, Edward W. 1978. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books. P, 273.

⁴⁸ Said, Edward W. 1978. P. 272.

as Bhabha points out, these contradictions suggest that Said fails to fully realize the “instrumentalist” notion of power/knowledge he seems to require to make this demand for correct representation.⁴⁹ For Bhabha, the stereotype is not a simplification because it is a misrepresentation, but because “it is an arrested, fixated form of representation, that, in denying the play of difference constitutes a problem for the *representation* of the subject in significations of psychic and social relations”.⁵⁰ That is to say, rather than searching for a “correct” representation, the more crucial problem is the use and deconstruction of stereotyping. Rey Chow’s discussion of “Orientalist melancholia” provides an example of the reversed use of stereotyping. As Chow points out, there has been an “Orientalist melancholia” among contemporary western Sinologists, who cherish the memory of Chinese classic literature and regret the “westernized” modern Chinese literature.⁵¹ A touch of “Orientalist melancholia” is also found among anti-westernized Chinese intelligentsia. Nevertheless, in this research, I intend to make clear that any essentialist dichotomy between cultural authenticity and westernization only leads to a theoretical dead end and a foreclosure of the question of postcolonial subjectivity.

In the discursive practices of early twentieth century Chinese culture reform, there was also an obvious operation the dichotomy between Orientalism and Occidentalism – specifically, about the malady of Oriental culture and the merits of western culture. In a

⁴⁹ Bhabha, Homi K. 1994. *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge. P, 72.

⁵⁰ Bhabha, Homi K. 1994. P. 75.

⁵¹ See Chow Rey. 1993. *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies*. Indian University Press. P, 4.

context of nation saving filled with uncertainty, the discursive play of Orientalism and Occidentalism was articulated through and complicated by an insistence on a universal logic of Cosmopolitanism, according to which, “any scientific truth is the property of the whole world, and is not ‘authentic culture’ of any nation”.⁵² Through this insistence on cultural Cosmopolitanism, the boundaries between the Orient and the Occidental begin to blur, and heterogeneous elements flow, transfer, decompose, recompose, displace and hybridize. This cosmopolitan notion of universal logic, I argue, was employed by Chinese intelligentsia as a kind of discursive *transmitter* constituting strategies of decontextualization and recontextualization. Therefore, for this study, the composition of discursive threads – through the actual molecular discursive practices -- is far more important than the apparent dichotomization in textual presentation.

The molecular re-composition of heterogeneous elements was especially remarkable in the discourse of Chinese linguistic modernity if only because language was understood as being at the core of subjectivity. In fact, in the New Culture Movement, the intelligentsia consciously identified their goal as the reconstruction of a modern “scientific” and “modern” subject. Even when they unconsciously reproduced the logic of Eurocentric Orientalism, by the act of repetition they already opened up a space of rewriting and negotiation. As French philosopher Henri Bergson suggests, “the true effect of repetition is to decompose and then recompose, and thus appeal to the

⁵² See Qian, Xuan-Tong. 錢玄同. 1918. “Letters: on Esperanto” in *New Youth* 5(2). Pp. 182-4. <通信：論世界語>，《新青年》第五卷第二號。P. 183.

intelligence of the body.”⁵³ It is through repetition that new details are brought to attention and essential elements revealed. Therefore, a study of how the discourse of the New Culture Movement “repeated” and rewrote the western discourse should help clarify the theoretical issue of Orientalism, and contribute to understanding the ambiguous relationship between postcolonial subject and colonial discourse. In the 1920’s New Culture Movement, we find the most ferocious attack ever made on Chinese culture *and* language. Pioneering novelist Lu Xun (1881-1936) accused Confucian culture of “cannibalism” – Confucianism eats (Chinese) people. Eminent classic scholar Qian Xuan-Tong claimed, “To save China from demise, to make Chinese nation a civilized nation in the twentieth century, it is imperative to abolish Confucianism and wipe out Taoism, and the fundamental solution to abolish Confucianism and Taoism is to abolish their carrier – Chinese script.”⁵⁴ While these radical accusations of Chinese culture and language were often dismissed as an irrational voice of despair, in this study, I argue that they must be seriously examined as an important and necessary rhetoric stage of discursive operation moving forwards.

6.3. *Use of Chinese prejudice*

Another theoretical issue connected to Orientalism, but less often discussed, is

⁵³ Bergson, Henri. 1911. *Creative Evolution*. Tr. By Arthur Mitchell. New York: Henry Holt and Company. P. 111.

⁵⁴ Qian, Xuan-Tong. 錢玄同. 1918. “Letters: China’s language Problem Nowadays” in *New Youth* 4(4). Pp, 350-356. <通信:中國今後之文字問題>, 《新青年》第四卷第四號。P, 354.

what French philosopher Jacques Derrida calls the “Chinese prejudice”. Derrida’s treatment of the “Chinese prejudice” is brief but pertinently fills a lack in Said’s *Orientalism*, which leaves out German Sinology, probably because it showed only indirect complicity with colonialism. In *Grammatology*, Derrida argues that during what he calls the “European consciousness crisis” in the eighteenth century, philosophers proposed plans for a “general history of writing” and begot three “prejudices”: “theological prejudice” (the myth of a natural writing given by God, such as Hebrew and Greek scripts), “Chinese prejudice”(the project of a non-historical writing as a model for universal script), and “hieroglyphist prejudice”(the mystic belief that hieroglyphs are a sublime script). As Derrida points out, Hegel and Leibniz represent the two sides of the same “Chinese prejudice.” Both believe that Chinese script is a *non*-historical writing. For Leibniz, the “arbitrariness” and the therefore “independence with regard to history” of Chinese writing, its *non*-phonetic essence, qualifies it as one of the *artificial* languages (among other symbolic languages, such as mathematics and algebra) which with some modification can serve as a model of the philosophical language, or “universal script.”⁵⁵ For Hegel, the same *non*-historical nature of Chinese writing proves itself to be “*primitive, in lack of genuine subjectivity, and a great hindrance to the development of the science*”.⁵⁶ A language like Chinese “has no way of indicating

⁵⁵ See Derrida, Jacques. 1974. *Of Grammatology*. Translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. The John Hopkins University Press. Pp, 76, 78-79.

⁵⁶ Hegel, Georg Wilhelm. 1956 [1830-31]. *The Philosophy of History*. Tr. J. Sibree. New York: Dover Publication, INC. pp, 132-134.

grammatical case. Rather it simply leaves its words standing one next to the other”.⁵⁷ For Hegel, Chinese script represents no *real* relations to History and Reason. Alphabetic and phonetic writing, on the other hand, is historic, and rational, that is, alive and evolving with the inner voice of speech. Derrida points out that both the Leibnizian project of universal script and the Hegelian critique of non-historical writing in different directions confirm the logocentrism and phonologism of western metaphysics.⁵⁸ Logos – as its etymological analysis reveals – means *phoné*, the voice of Reason or God, a spontaneous self-presence, or auto-affection of speech.⁵⁹ Derrida argues that this connotation of logos never loses its importance in the western metaphysics of presence, and therefore that logocentrism also appears to be phonologism, privileging speech over writing.⁶⁰ Hegel’s debasement of Chinese script, which he and others believe to be *non*-phonetic and *non*-historic, is a pertinent example of western phonologism.

In the early twentieth century when China faced a “consciousness crisis”, the discourse of the New Culture Movement appeared to “repeat” the western privileging of alphabetic writing, and thereby urged Romantization of Chinese script and the introduction of “grammar” into Chinese writing. We find the same phonological

⁵⁷ Hegel quoted in Saussy, Huan. 1993. *The Problem of A Chinese Aesthetic*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. P, 165. For Hegel’s semiology, see also Derrida, J. 1982. “Tympan” in *Margins of Philosophy*. Tr. by Alan Bass. The University of Chicago Press. Esp., 102-103.

⁵⁸ Derrida, Jacques. 1974. Pp, 78-79.

⁵⁹ Derrida, Jacques. 1974. P. 98.

⁶⁰ Derrida, Jacques. 1974. Also see Derrida, J. 1981. *Positions*. Translated by Alan Bass. The University of Chicago Press.

critique of Chinese script as *primitive, irrational, in the lack of genuine subjectivity and grammar, and a great hindrance to the development of the science*, repeating basically everything Hegel had said about Chinese *non-historic* writing, although none of the proponents seemed to have read Hegel on language. Perhaps, this “repetition” shows how the “Chinese prejudice” is integral to the modern project of “westernization.” In this study [especially chapters 3, 4 and 6], I intend to examine the discursive relationship among Romantization (the invention of a phonetic system for Chinese script if not to replace it), the introduction of grammatical and “scientific” rules into Chinese writing, and how these reforms were understood to be necessary for forging a modern Chinese subject and worlding China into World History.

While critiquing the three prejudices as European hallucination, Derrida nevertheless appears to slip (probably also due to his ignorance of the languages) when he asserts that “nonphonetic scripts like Chinese or Japanese” are “the testimony of a powerful movement of civilization developing *outside* of all logocentrism”.⁶¹ Spivak suggests that Derrida seems to commit a “reverse ethnocentrism” when he insists logocentrism is “a property of the *West*”.⁶² Regarding the same issue, Chow argues that Derrida’s “stigmatizing” of Chinese writing might suggest that stereotyping is too fundamental for human cognition to be completely avoided, and the more important question is about the *use* of stereotyping, that is, “*who* gets to mobilize stereotypes

⁶¹ See Derrida, Jacques. 1974. P. 90. Italics added.

⁶² See Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 1974. “Translator’s Preface” for Derrida, Jacques. 1974. *Of Grammatology*. The John Hopkins University Press. P, lxxxii.

effectively and productively” and “*who* doesn’t”.⁶³

In the discursive practices of the New Culture Movement and the multi-dimensional literary reform, there was a reverse and perhaps re-reverse ethnocentrism generating. Indeed, the Chinese New Culturalists’ “stigmatizing” of Chinese writing was far more radical than western philosophers’. The stigmatizing of Chinese culture and script was pushed to the limit when Qian Xuan-Tong, who once proposed the replacement of Chinese script with Esperanto, wrote, “Chinese script is hieroglyph with insufficient adjectives and prepositions, without inflection in verbs, difficult to recognize and write, and never clear in meaning. It is fundamentally inferior...a corpse died thousands of year ago...speech and writing are remote...if no one invented Esperanto, I would suggest we adopt German, French or English [to replace Chinese].”⁶⁴ Later on, when the project of replacing Chinese with Esperanto or European languages was given up, the cosmopolitan notion of universal grammar served as what I want to refer to as a *discursive transmitter* for “cultural translation.” That is the fourth theoretical issue of this dissertation.

6.4. *Question of Cultural Translation*

Ma’s Chinese Grammar (1898) was the first modern attempt to systematically apply European grammar to Chinese script. Its author Ma Jian-Zhong (1845-1900)

⁶³ Chow, Rey. 2001. “How (the) Inscrutable Chinese led to Globalized Theory” in *The Modern Language Association of America*. 116.1; pp. 69-74. See p, 73. Italics added.

⁶⁴ See Qian, Xuan-Tong. 錢玄同. 1918. “Letters: on Esperanto” in *New Youth* 5(5). Pp,

proposed the notion of “universal grammar” and believed that the application of European grammar to Chinese could help systematize Chinese script. As such, the introduction of the western notion of grammar raises a specific question of “cultural translation” which plays a crucial role in the construction of postcolonial linguistic subjectivity. The issue of cultural translation concerns more than the direct translation of western work, such as Yan Fu’s epoch-making translation of Huxley’s *Evolution and Ethics* to *Tianyan lun* (On Heavenly Evolution), as discussed above. The question of cultural translation also involves the introduction and creative-transformation of ideas and discourses. In “The Task of the Translator”, Walter Benjamin argues that in translation there is the problem of ripening the “seed of pure language”.⁶⁵ The notion of “pure language” indicates an assumption of a universal language and its necessity and impossibility. As Derrida puts it, after the destruction of Babel, when God imposes and opposes his name,

He ruptures the rational transparency but interrupts also the colonial violence or the linguistic imperialism. He destined them to translation, he subjects them to the law of a translation both necessary and impossible; in a stroke with his translatable-untranslatable name he delivers a universal reason (it will no longer be subject to the rule of a particular nation), but he simultaneously limits its very universality:

524-526; 542-543. <通信:論世界語>，《新青年》第五卷第五號。P, 542.

⁶⁵ Benjamin, Walter. 1986. “The Task of the Translator” in *Illumination*. Edited by Hannah Arendt. Translated by Harry Zohn. New York: Schocken Books. Pp. 69-82. See p, 77.

forbidden transparency, impossible univocity.⁶⁶

The Biblical metaphor of Babel Tower of course is Eurocentric, so is the very notion of a universal language. Paradoxically, in the postcolonial situation, ideas of a Eurocentric “origin” like “universalism or “cosmopolitanism” often serve to deconstruct the hierachical dichotomy between Western culture and non-Western culture. Cultural translation is a task that is both necessary and impossible, and acquires a form only through decompostion and recomposition of infinitely small points of meaning, and by entering back into the translator’s own language. Meaning is “untranslatable” and “transferrable”.⁶⁷

In early twentieth-century China, the task of cultural translators always involved returning back to their own language in order to find a *form* or *mode* of translation. In this process, cultural translation also involves a (re)ordering of the political agenda. As Bhabha suggests, “cultural translation desacralizes the transparent assumption, and in the very act, demands a contextual specificity, a historical differentiation *within* minority positions”.⁶⁸ In rewriting the nationalist project of modernity, this first agenda to which others keep referring was rebuilding a new Chinese nation, for which a modern subjectivity capable of scientific thinking and action was imperative. Therefore, all the cultural and linguistic movements demanded not only a new *way* of writing – a new literary medium – but also new orientations and contents of literature. Pioneering

⁶⁶ Derrida, J. 1985. “Des Tours de Babel” in *Difference in Translation*. Cornell University Press. P, 174.

⁶⁷ Derrida, J. 1985. P. 204.

⁶⁸ Bhabha, Homi K. 1994. *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge. P, 228.

colloquial poet and proponent of scientific method Hu Shi argued, “the malady of Chinese literature is speech without substance. Nowadays people only know ‘speech without writing can not reach far’, and yet do not know writing is pointless when it speaks without substance”.⁶⁹ The “substance” here actually referred to an intervention of national consciousness. The New Culture Movement was indeed a consciousness reform movement. The related New Literature Movement was therefore characterized by an effort to disenchant the “traditional” values, and a tone of social criticism and romanticism which as a whole emphasized the “modern” value of individualism. More importantly, however, in the construction of the New Writing, form and content were seen as the same question, as we see in the equation of alphabetic writing to the scientific thinking. Translation of European syntax was therefore seen as a way of introducing scientific thinking into Chinese language.

In this introduction, I present the historical background and theoretical issues of Chinese language reform as a project of cultural and linguistic modernity. In the following chapters, I will investigate the molecular discursive practices of this Chinese project of modernity and the dynamic movement that went beyond the apparent oppositions.

Chapter 2 elaborates the discursive field of Chinese postcoloniality in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. It began with the dichotomy between *Dao* and *Qi*, which guided the boundaries between Chinese learning and Western

⁶⁹ Hu, Shi. 胡適. 1917. “A Modest Proposal for the Reform of Literature” in *New*

learning, and led to the notion of language as a *Qi* [technology] of artificial creative evolution.

Chapter 3 investigates the ideology that alphabetic writing is more scientific than others. I will discuss Chinese intellectuals' search for a Chinese alphabet, and Hegel's "alphabetic prejudice" which is shared by Chinese New Culturalists. I will also discuss the significance of the dual structure of Chinese figurative-phonetic character making.

Chapter 4 examines the ideology that Chinese writing lacks grammar and therefore is unsuitable for scientific thinking, and the problem of grammatical equivalence. I will also rethink the very notion of "universal grammar" through a discussion of the problem of "classes of words" in modern Chinese linguistics.

Chapter 5 deals with the discursive practices of cosmopolitanisms in early modern China. I will discuss the notion of "world" and "世界 *Shi Jie*" as well as several versions of trans-creative cosmopolitanism in that particular historical period. I will also examine the discursive relation between "westernization" and "cosmopolitanization" through a discussion of the debate concerning "complete westernization" and "Cultural Construction based on Chinese Self-Position" in 1934.

Chapter 6 examines the translational practices of New Culturalists, especially the problems and possibilities involved in their literal rendering of European syntax, or "grammatical Europeanization." The discussion points to the neglected molecular nature of a trans-creative linguistic project.

Chapter 7 is the conclusion. I rethink the grand notion of Europeanization through

Youth 2(5). Pp, 1-11. <文學改良芻議>，《新青年》第二卷第五號。P, 1.

a discussion of the Mass Language movement in 1934, which itself was a critical continuation of New Writing. The conclusion elaborates the sociological significance of Chinese linguistic modernity in which writing was a crucial technology of *worldling* a modern China. I will elaborate the very notion of “Western Culture” as a translational effect in the postcolonial situation.

Chapter 2

Western Learning and Chinese Learning: the Discursive Formation of New Writing as Technology of Artificial Creative Evolution

Nietzsche says that the modern era is one of “transvaluation of all values”, which is the best explanation of “the critical attitude.” ... It [the critical attitude] does not know the so-called harmonization of the past and the now, or the Chinese and the foreign. (Hu Shi 1919: 6, 10)

An event...is not a decision, a treaty, a reign, or a battle but a reversal of a relationship of forces, the usurpation of power, the appropriation of a vocabulary turned against those who had once used it, a feeble domination that poisons itself as it grows lax, the entry of a masked “other.” (Foucault 1971, 1984: 88)

1. The Discursive Operations of Westernization in the Chinese Project of New Writing

The New Culture Movement or the May Fourth Movement in the broad sense has dominated the Chinese imagination of modernity for more than eighty years. It has attracted both celebration and accusation. The contemporary currents of liberalism, modernism, experimentalism and Marxism are traced back to it. Unfortunate trends like political radicalism, vulgar evolutionism, utilitarianism cultural totalism, cultural determinism and so on are attributed to it. In 1949 the Chinese Communist Party established the People's Republic of China and announced May Fourth as the “Day of

Youth”, highlighting the revolutionary spirit and anti-traditionalism of Chinese young people. In the very next year, the National Party that withdrew to Taiwan announced May Fourth as the “Day of Literature”, emphasizing the modernist spirit and the cultural aspect of the New Culture Movement and *Pai-hua* literature movement. Under the two governments competing for the legitimate representation of the “Great China”, the discussion of the May Fourth was politically channeled by the official ideologies until the political relaxation in the 1980’s. The modes of discussion have been more or less established in both China and Taiwan. In China, the celebration of political radicalism has been turned into a critique of the same political radicalism plus culturalism, which was said to contribute to the catastrophic Cultural Revolution. In Taiwan, the discussion of modernism of New Literature continues to be the main issue. To be true, all these are important issues to be tackled. However, there always seems a piece missing in the picture. That is the *critique of Chinese writing* itself which was once the kernel of the movement, yet was soon foreclosed after a brief discussion, as I pointed out in the introductory chapter. Nowadays the discussion of Chinese literary reform is restricted to the level of linguistic technicalities. This reduction to linguistics indicates the fact that its broader context of postcoloniality has been taken for granted. On the other hand, writing as a technology in the broader sense, rather than as just technical, has not been taken seriously.

The situation of Chinese postcoloniality must be traced back at least to the Opium War in 1840, when the Qing dynasty was devastatingly defeated by the Great Britain. It was from the reflection on this defeated experience that the first serious debates about westernization began. In these early reflections and debates about “western learning”

and “Chinese learning”, we find the nascent field of discourse in which the century-long opposition between westernization and cultural authenticity has operated. The discursive formation of the New Culture Movement betrayed a certain continuity with the early debates in the late Qing period, despite its obvious intention of marking a discontinuity, as presented in its radical anti-traditionalism and its ferocious critique of the early dichotomy between “Chinese learning as substance, and Western learning as function”[中學爲體，西學爲用 *Zhong Xue Wei Ti, Xi Xue Wei Yong*]. In this apparent discontinuity, however, the critiqued old dichotomy was replaced with new and even more indomitable dichotomies, such as those between Western and Chinese cultures, and complete westernization and cultural authenticity or backwardness, depending on which position one was taking. All these distinctions assume some kind of cultural (w)holism that manifests a certain affinity to the metaphor of social/cultural organism. The period of New Culture Movement, or the May Fourth Movement, was a turning point, in the sense that it radicalized, traversed, and reversed many existing themes, and led to further development in a variety of ways. And it was in this turning point, that many discursive elements and strategies manifested their most sparkling and flickering nature.

One should bear in mind that the discourse of New Culture Movement was not coherent, just as any other discourses, if not even more so. The discourse was filled with contradictions through which the discursive formation attained a dynamic movement. It formed a dynamic relationship with the discourse of its counter-movement, i.e., those who argued against the New Culture Movement. It is also true when we consider the uses of the discursive pair of Occidentalism and Orientalism in the rhetoric of

westernization and that of authenticity. The rhetorical contrast of a certain image of the West and that of China was continuously employed in the discursive strategy arguing for a project of modernity. In a way these uses were pretty much examples of what Spivak has called “strategic essentialism” which serves “a scrupulously visible political interest.”¹ As a matter of fact, Occidentalism and Orientalism as stylized essentialized images of the West and of the East are not uncommon in the academic world, as Said and the others have noted.² Besides the construction of Orientalism as Europe’s Other among western academics, the construction of a certain version of Occidentalism as the ground for “cross-cultural” comparative studies has been a common practice, especially with the rapid development of modern anthropology since the nineteenth century. Hegel’s Philosophy of History and Max Weber’s comparison of the Occident and China are among the most well known examples. Likewise, certain versions of Orientalism can be found in the Eastern world, both politics and academics, and are often integral part of the rhetoric of cultural incommensurability or/and cultural authenticity. The tendency to essentialization differences is not unusual. It is the *historical specificity* of the uses of these discursive images that we have to pay extra attention to. As anthropologist Jonathan Spencer points out, the uses of Occidentalism in the East are often in very different political contexts than those in the Western academic. A historicist, anti-essentialist response to these uses can be politically and theoretically

¹ Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 1996. *The Spivak Reader*. Eds. By D. Landry and G. Maclean. Routledge. P, 204.

² See Said, Edward W. 1978. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, and Carrier, James G. (ed.) 1995. *Occidentalism: the Images of the West*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

inadequate.³ To be true, the tendency to essentialization is always politically dangerous in the sense that it often leads to the fixation of hierarchical distinctions between genders, races, nations, social classes, and even that between the West and the East. As a discursive strategy of resistance, however, the uses of Occidentalism and Orientalism in the non-western world often involve complex processes of *subject-position shifting* which need to be further articulated, as I pointed out in the introductory chapter. I want to emphasize here that the discursive operation of Occidentalism and Orientalism in the Chinese New Culture Movement is better understood in the context of Chinese postcoloniality and the resultant *condition* of subject-position shifting. I highlight the word condition because the postcolonial situation of subject-position shifting is not a freely chosen manipulation, but rather an imposition and requirement for those who have been thrown into the situation.

Putting the discursive operation in this context, the asymmetry between Occidentalism and Orientalism should also be borne in mind. In her recent review and discussion of Occidentalism, Shih Shu-Mei draws our attention to the political asymmetry between Occidentalism and Orientalism by highlighting the fact that Occidentalism (in China) has never subjugated its object (the West) under domination but rather led to the negation of China itself. For Shih, in the Occidentalism that the Chinese New Culture Movement invoked, the West was a “psychological” category,

³ Spencer, Jonathan. 1995. “Occidentalism in the East: The Uses of the West in the Politics and Anthropology of South Asia” in *Occidentalism: the Images of the West*. Ed. by Carrier, James G. Oxford: Clarendon Press. P, 235, 250.

working through a traumatic desire for the Other.⁴ By psychologizing the discursive operation of Occidentalism, however, the complex processes of discursive displacement and subject-position shifting are glossed over.

One of the characteristics of the New Culture discourse that distinguished it from the late Qing discourse was its forceful critique of Chinese writing as the embodiment of the broader critique of Chinese culture and nationality. Chinese writing was understood as the backward carrier of backward social values, if indeed not savage or uncivilized. I argue that a radical rethinking of the critique of Chinese writing in the postcolonial situation shall be able to provide a new understanding of discursive formation of the New Culture Movement, and bring forth new discursive strategies moving to the future. This chapter puts the critique of Chinese writing back in the center of the debates about the fundamental postcolonial opposition between westernization and cultural authenticity. Centering the issue of Chinese writing in the rethinking of this opposition is useful in several ways. First, conceiving writing as a structure allows us to decenter anthropocentric notions of cultural agency. Second, the project of New Writing as an active effort of *artificial* evolution, as I would like to show in this study, already pointed to the problematic conception of a linear temporality, that new culture intelligentsia generally assumed in their imagination of modernity. As such, the notion of New Writing as the technology of artificial creative evolutions provides us a way to dismantle the twisted curve hidden in the apparent straight line of evolution. That is to

⁴ Shih, Shu-Mei. 2001. *The Lure of the Modern: Writing Modernism in Semicolonial China, 1917-1937*. Berkeley: University of California Press. See chapter 5, esp. p. 134, 136.

say, the apparently “straight line” is indeed comprised of a bundle of divergent lines of evolution, which are interwoven together a certain conceptual reduction. Third, the general issue of writing helps us to rethink the implication of “technology” which was seen as opposed to and/or subordinate to “culture” in the early twentieth century China, and thereby to reassess the opposition between substance and function. Fourth, rethinking the notion of technology through the critique of Chinese writing in the New Culture Project provides a way to traverse the dichotomization of cultural categories. In my view, the detour of Chinese approach to the “Western culture” in the early twentieth century appeared to be a continuous *displacement of hierarchical oppositions*. It moved from the old oppositions between substance and function, or culture and technics, to those between Western culture and Chinese culture, westernization and cultural authenticity, phonetic writing and non-phonetic writing, and scientific or non-scientific. In each displacement, a certain shift of subject-position often was involved and yet often remained unarticulated.

2. A Preliminary Archeology of Chinese Notions of Technology: the Virtual Evolution between Dao and Qi

The Chinese term for “westernization”, 西化 *Xi Hua*, literally means “becoming western”, meaning to become more like the western. This process of “becoming”, as I will point out in following discussion, involves molecular transversal movement across the given boundaries between “Western Culture” and “Chinese Culture”. For now it suffices to note that the strong implication of losing Chinese identity in the term *Xi Hua* evoked a sense of uneasiness and sounded too radical for most officials-intellectuals in

the late Qing period. At that time, they realized the necessity of learning something from the West, that is, the “western learning” 西學 *Xi Xue*. Both “westernization” and “western learning” indicated an effort to learn what could *only* be found in the west, in other word, what was absent in China. The interpretation of the nature and scope of this Chinese “absence”, which is therefore “essence” of Western Culture, has been the single most important factor in the discursive formation of westernization. As we will see, the site of this lack/ essence would first be identified as “technology” (in the narrow sense), later expanded to the field of “culture”, and more sepcifically, culture (especially writing) as technology of evolution.

Before it was viewed by the New Culture Movement as a kind of all-dimensional *lack*, this absence was generally seen in the late Qing period basically if not only as being at the level of technics, or as what they said in Chinese 器物技藝 *Qi Wu Ji Yi*, meaning utensil, object, skill and handicrafts. In 1842, two years after the Opium War between the Britain and China, the Qing official Wei Yuan proposed one of the most well known phrases in modern Chinese history: “Learn from the foreigners’ strength in order to restrict the foreigners.” [師夷之長以制夷 *Shi Yi Zhi Chang Yi Zhi Yi*]. According to him, the foreigners’ strength “consists in three things: one, warships; second, firepower; three, military training.”⁵ In a word, war technology. The Chinese term for the foreigner Wei used here, 夷 *Yi*, was far from a value-neutral one, but derogatory, implying the uncivilized-ness of the foreigners. This term was commonly

⁵ Sun, Quang-De. 孫廣德. 1985. *The Late Qing Tradition and the Debate about Westernization*. Taipei: Shang-Wu Press. 《晚清傳統與西化的爭論》，台灣商務

and officially used until the 1858 *China-Britain Tian-Jin Treaty* banned its official use and replaced it with the neutral term for the foreigners 洋 *Yang*, literally meaning those come from across the ocean.⁶ As such, those from Europe were called 西洋 *Xi Yang*, the western foreigners, and those from Japan 東洋 *Dong Yang*, the eastern foreigners.

The first thing the Qing government recognized was they had to learn the war technology, which was then defined as merely belonging to the level of technics or 器 *Qi*, as opposed to 道 *Dao*, the metaphysical principle of Being and Becoming. Drawing on the fundamental distinction of *Qi* and *Dao*, the substance 體 *Ti* of Chinese spirit, the cultural integrity and political superstructure, supposedly grounded by the *Dao*, was safeguarded from the introduction of western technologies which were only valued because of their practical use or on the level of function 用 *Yong*. Therefore, the famous saying “Chinese learning as substance, Western learning as function.” As a matter of fact, the distinction between *Ti* and *Yong*, as well as that between *Dao* and *Qi*, had been a central part of Chinese cosmology and metaphysics for more than two thousand years. In order to fully understand the late Qing articulation of *Ti/Yong* distinction, I want to first consider these two related distinctions as presented in traditional Chinese metaphysics, before moving to the significance and implication of this dualistic principle of late Qing period reform and its discursive displacement.

印書局發行。P, 11.

⁶ See Chen, Xu-Lu. 陳旭麓. 1984. *Rethinking the Modern History: On the Distinction between Yi and Yang*. Guang-Dong People Press. 《近代史思辨錄. 辨「夷」「洋」》, 廣東人民出版社。Pp, 25-26.

My discussion itself will create a *translational space* between those ancient Chinese texts which articulate the dynamic nature of *Dao/Qi* relation, and the post-structuralist tradition in western philosophy, which emphasizes the movement of “difference” as a necessity for the concept of “identity”. I will draw on especially French philosopher Gilles Deleuze’s “philosophy of *difference*”, which, along Jacques Derrida’s “philosophy of *différance*”, works against the hierarchical binary opposition between human and nature. German philosopher Martin Heidegger’s rethinking of the nature of technology as the *bringing-forth* of new things, as well as his emphasis on the process of *presencing* and becoming, also belongs to this post-structuralist tradition, and is useful for my rethinking of the shifting regime of *Qi* in the early modern Chinese project of westernization. I myself therefore am conducting a molecular transversal communication between “Chinese Culture” and “Western Culture”, and so did those early modern Chinese new intelligentsia of “westernization.” Indeed, I will argue that in the postcolonial situation, as well as in the nowadays so-called global situation, what we call “Chinese Culture” and “Western Culture” only *become* with these movements.

The philosopher Cheng Yi (1033-1107) in the Song period, whose ideas had great influence on the later development of 理學 *Li Xue* (Studies of Principles, a major school of New Confucianism) in the Song (960 - 1279) and Ming (1368 - 1644) dynasties which in turn decisively shaped the theoretical horizon of *Dao/Qi* relation in the Qing period (1644 - 1911), once wrote:

We must say that: the metaphysical is *Dao*, the physical is *Qi*. But *Qi*
is also *Dao*, and *Dao* is also *Qi*.

形而上爲道，形而下爲器，須著如此說。然器，亦道也，道，亦器也。⁷

Please note that the terms “metaphysical” and “physical”, as conventional translations for Chinese terms 形而上 *Xing Er Shang* and 形而下 *Xing Er Xia*, could be misleading because of the connotation of two ontological planes and Cartesian dualism in the tradition of western philosophy.⁸ The Chinese terms 形而上 *Xing Er Shang* literally means “beyond formation”, and 形而下 *Xing Er Xia* means “under formation”, or they can mean respectively “form and above” and “form and below”. Therefore we have two different versions of translation:

1. We must say that what is beyond formation is *Dao*, and what is under formation is *Qi*. But *Qi* is also *Dao*, and *Dao* is also *Qi*.
2. We must say that: *Dao* forms and (moves) beyond, *Qi* forms and (moves) below. But *Qi* is also *Dao*, and *Dao* is also *Qi*.

In the first case, *Dao* and *Qi* can be interpreted as *before* and *after* formation within a linear temporality. In the second case, they can be said to be *different configurations* of

⁷ Qouted in Zhou, Dun-Yi. 周敦頤. (1017-1073). “Tai Ji Tu” in *Zhou Dun-Yi Collection*, from Chinese Philosophical Etext Archive: Song through Qing Texts. <太極圖：無極而太極>，出自《周敦頤集》，中國哲學電文檔案 宋元明清部。
<http://sangle.web.wesleyan.edu/etext/song-qing/zhou.html>.

⁸ These conventional translations are in turn based on the conventional Chinese translation of western notion of “metaphysics” into 形而上學 *Xing Er Shang Xue*, first by early modern Japanese scholars. Therefore we see a circulating movement of translation between West and China in different contexts. The conventional translations, once established, however, are often taken for granted and reified. As such, we need to unpack the translations in order to grasp the nuance of the notions.

formation. Either way, there is a third term “formation” in between *Dao* and *Qi*, which generally refers to the form or formation of things.⁹ Indeed, as we will see that the dynamic relation between *Dao* and *Qi* is mainly about the *forming (becoming) of things*.

Let us note there are two sentences in the quote from Cheng Yi. The first sentence, which I provide three versions of translation, was directly quoted from 易經 *I Ching* (literally meaning *The Book of Changes*), one of the most ancient philosophical text in the world. It tells us the *difference* between *Dao* and *Qi* – in terms of their relation to the “formation” (of things). The second sentence, “*Qi* is also *Dao*, and *Dao* is also *Qi*”, however, tells us that they are the *same* – that is, in terms of their existence. As such, *Dao* and *Qi* are univocal, but nevertheless must be distinguished. In other words, although *Qi* and *Dao* are defined as two *ontic* halves in terms of their relation to the emergence of things (and the constant change of phenomena), they remain on the same *ontological* plane. Therefore, *Xing* or “formation” as the third term in between *Dao* and *Qi* plays a decisive role for the determination of *Dao/Qi* relation. As we will see, the key question of the late Qing project of western learning was exactly: *how do we generate new things through the appropriation of (new, western) Qi, without changing the (old, Chinese) Dao?* Then, as we will see, history seems to prove that it is impossible to move to a different regime of *Qi* without simultaneously transforming the given configuration of *Dao*, that is, it is impossible to keep *Qi* and *Dao* on different

⁹ 形 *Xing* (formation) in Chinese is often connected to 象 *Xiang* (phenomenon). *Xing-Xiang* means “images.” The Chinese term for “pictograph” is also the combination of these two characters *Xiang-Xing Zi*. I will return to this point in chapter 3 when I analyze the structure of Chinese character as opposing to the European alphabetic model.

ontological and moral/political planes.

In the following discussion I will use “music” to discuss the *machinic* relation between *Qi* and *Dao*.¹⁰ Music is of special interest here because its movement *resembles* the movement of *Dao* itself as the begetter of things. According to one of the most ancient Daoist classic *Lu Shi Chun Qiu* [吕氏春秋], edited by the prime minister of the Qin dynasty Lu Bu-Wei (?- BC 235), the “great music” is a vocal manifestation of *Dao*. Here musical instrument is the *Qi* [music organ] that reveals the voice of *Dao*, and brings forth the phenomenon called music.

The origin of music is profound, born from *measurements*, and based on the Great One. The Great One begets the Two Appearances. The Two Appearances beget *Ying-Yang*. The change of *Ying* and *Yang* goes up and down. They unite together and become a *composition*. They are flux and flowing, sometimes go apart, sometimes unite together. Such is the heavenly constancy. ... All things are *created in* the Great One, and *become in Ying-Yang*. Sprout and vibrate. Congeal and form. Every body has its location, and must make its voice. The

¹⁰ I borrow the term “machinic” from Deleuze and Guattari, as in a “machinic assemblage”, which highlight the coexistence, combination and *co-evolution* of human agency and nonhuman parts of agency (machines, technology). Please see G. and Felix Guattari. 1987. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

This connotation of co-evolution is especially pertinent to my discussion of *Dao/Qi* relation in the Chinese postcolonial situation as the negotiation of Chinese learning (human spirit) and western learning (machines, technology).

voice comes from harmony. Harmony comes from fitness. It is according to harmony and fitness the forefather king established music. [italics added]

音樂之所由來者遠矣，生於度量，本於太一。太一出兩儀，兩儀出陰陽。陰陽變化，一上一下，合而成章。渾渾沌沌，離則復合，合則復離，是謂天常。... 萬物所出，造於太一，化於陰陽。萌芽始震，凝寒以形。形體有處，莫不有聲。聲出於和，和出於適。和適先王定樂，由此而生。¹¹

This passage is about the cosmological movement of *Dao*, which is also the rhythm of great music. The “great” music is “proper”, in a cosmological sense *and* a political sense. What is proper in a political sense is in harmony with the universe. What is proper in a cosmological sense is in accord with the movement of *Dao* or the “Great One 太一 *Tai Yi*..” As Lao Zi says, “One begets Two, Two begets Three, and Three begets Ten Thousand things.” The movement of *Dao* is in a word the production of multiplicity. *Dao* is a *Bergsonian Virtual Whole*, which is comprised of endless diagrammatical virtualities waiting to actualize. According to Deleuze, whose philosophy in a certain aspect enjoys a surprising affinity to Chinese Daoism,¹² the

¹¹ Lu Bu-Wei (?- BC 235). 呂不韋. (ed.) “On Great Music” in *Lu Shi Chun Qiu*. 〈大樂篇〉，《呂氏春秋》。http://www.chinapage.com/big5/literature/lubuwa.htm.

¹² This affinity is in part constituted through Deleuze’s engagement with Spinozist philosophy of immanence, which itself already shows a profound affinity to Daoist cosmology, in which the notion of a transcendental and anthropocentric cause has no place. The Bergsonian virtual Whole, also, especially in terms of “creative evolution” has a “vital” affinity to the notion of *Dao* as a “virtual” origin of things.

virtual is “real without being actual, ideal without being abstract.” The virtual is not the possible, which can only be realized in a certain original model and within a certain limitation. The latent virtualities, which are already real without being actual, create their own lines of divergence/difference *as* they actualize.¹³ They actualize by inventing. As Lao Zi says, “Everything *becomes by itself*” [萬物自化] The Daoist “Becoming By Itself” (Autonomous Becoming) 自化 *Zi-Hua* is a power or process that the Greeks have called *poésis*. Therefore, *Dao* is not an “origin” in a transcendental sense, which presents itself before all things. *Dao* is the immanent cause of things. Or rather it is a *field* in which things become themselves. Indeed, field is an important Daoist notion. It can be said “field” is one mode of *Dao*. In Chinese 道場 *Dao-Chang* “*Dao-field*” literally means the place to mediate and to practice Daoist teachings. This place or “field,” usually an empty room without furniture, is a plane itself, and is seen as a microcosm of *Dao* itself, *the boundless Dao-Field*. For a Chinese reader it is not surprising that Deleuze and Guattari call *Dao* a “field of immanence in which desire lacks nothing and therefore cannot be linked to any external or transcendent criterion”; *Dao* is an intensive “body without organs” in which only intensities pass.¹⁴ Indeed, through the notion of *Dao* one can make a deep connection between Chinese philosophy and Deleuzian thought. This connection also manifests in the discussion about music.

As we see in the above quote, music is born from “measurements.” We have to

¹³ See Deleuze, Gilles. 1991. *Bergsonism*. New York: Zone Books. Pp. 96-97.

¹⁴ See Deleuze G. and Félix Guattari. 1987. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. P. 157.

clarify this statement. On the field or plane of immanence called *Dao*, music or becoming-music is the dynamic movement consisting in “deterritorializing the refrain”, to use the Deleuzian term again.¹⁵ Music, as a *Qi* or an “organ” of *Dao*, is born from measurements, that are the *Qi* 器 of measuring the numerical multiplicity of musical sounds. In another word, measurements are the *techné* of bringing forth music, to borrow the Heideggerean term. The musical instrument, composition and play as specific arrangement and presentation of sounds all depend on certain forms of measurements. The musical *Qi* is an “organ” of *Dao*, allowing the Great One to perform the music of multiplicity, and sing the song of the cosmos. Or rather, music of the numerical multiplicity performs the virtual multiplicity of *Dao*, because *Dao* is not only a field of immanence in which things become, but also the field of composition in which music and arts perform. It is through this *performativity* of *Qi* that the virtualities actualize.

Here some might describe the relation between *Dao* and *Qi* as *organic* if they take in the *metaphor* of organism to articulate this relation. However, the notion of biological organism involves a stratified and hierarchical organization of organs, which is not appropriate to grasp the wholist and immanent nuance of *Dao*. Indeed, as Lao Zi says, “*Dao*” is only a name of convenience, so are the “Great” or the “Great One”, which refers to the undifferentiated and inexhaustible constant state of change. This holistic “Great One,” the virtual Whole, very much Like the Deleuzian “body without organs,”¹⁶

¹⁵ Deleuze G. and Félix Guattari. 1987. P. 300.

¹⁶ And let us not forget Deleuze and Guattari themselves call *Dao* an intensive “body without organs.”

is not against the notion of “organ” itself, but only the stratified organization of organism.

Take seriously the etymological semantics of *Qi*, perhaps it would be truer and better if we understand the relation between *Dao* and *Qi* as a *machinic* relation. I use the Deleuzian term *mechinic* to highlight the co-evolution of *Dao* and *Qi* in the process of bringing forth new things. Only here it involves the notion of a *machine without a human-maker*. A “machine” that is not mechanic. As a matter of fact, the notion of biological organism itself is already based on a certain metaphor of machine. Etymologically both *Qi* 器 and Greek *organon*, from which “organ” comes, literally means a tool or an instrument. Latin *organum*, *organa* and *organis* required a musical meaning. It runs a similar development to Chinese term for musical organ, *Yue-Qi* (Music-Qi). And *Qi* is the utensil or tool in general. In Chinese, a *Qi* also often refers to a *container* as in 容器 *Rong-Qi*. The metaphor of *Qi* is prevalent in Chinese idioms about *human* capacity. For example, 器量 *Qi-Liang*, literally “the volume of a container,” refers to a person’s mental amplitude, or the capacity for tolerance (of others and Otherness). Actually, the character *Qi* is often used to describe a person’s general capacity or special ability. Confucius said: “A noble man is not restricted to one *Qi*.”[君子不器] That is to say, a noble man’s capacity should be liberal and not restricted to any specific skills. The saying “Great *Qi* is accomplished late.”[大器晚成] refers to a person’s big success always takes longer to come. Indeed, man is a machine. A machine, without organs.”

in Chinese, is called 機械 *Ji-Xie*, or 機器 *Ji-Qi*, meaning a subtle-designed *Qi*. However, unlike “*Qi*” which basically contains a positive connotation of capacity, the character 機 *Ji* has been burdened with many negative connotations. 機心 *Ji-Xin*, (a mechanic heart) means crafty and treacherous or deceitful scheme. Moreover, in ancient Chinese the use of machines was seen as a spiritual deterioration. In a word, *Ji* is an excessive *Qi*. Zhuang Zi (BC.369-286), the second master of *Dao* after Lao Zi, made his famous unfavorable comments on machines run as follows,

Whoever has machines must have mechanic matters. Whoever has mechanic matters must have a mechanic heart. With a mechanic heart in the chest, one lost the pure white. Without the pure white, one's spirit becomes unstable. Those whose spirits are unstable are unable to carry *Dao*”

有機械者必有機事 有機事者必有機心 機心存於胸中 則純白不備 純白不備 則神生不定 神生不定者 道之所不載也¹⁷

The development of sophisticated machines was seen as against the very spirit of *Dao*. This debasement of machines dominated Chinese notion of technology until the late nineteenth century when China encountered the invincible power of western technology.

But what is the spirit of *Dao*? Why are there things which are “not able to carry *Dao*” if everything becomes itself and by itself *in Dao*? In teachings like the

¹⁷ Zhuang Zi. *Zhuang Zi*, Chapter 12 “Tian Di”(Heaven and Earth). 《莊子外篇天地第十二》。 http://www.yasue888.net/chong_chi12.html.

debasement of machines, *Dao* as the prescriptive norm emerges and *Dao* as the boundless field of virtual Whole is imposed a moral delimitation. In the dynastic China, the political system was bestowed a cosmological credential as part of the great cosmic order. The moral *Dao* emerged from and overshadow the ontological *Dao* precisely because for ancient Chinese there is a homologous relationship between the cosmological, political and moral orders. This debasement of machines passed down to later generations for more than two thousand years. Therefore, during the encounter with the invincible power of western technology, the “foreign *Li Qi* 利器”(sharp technology) were often described as “*excessive strange skills*” 奇技淫巧, as the leading official of Foreign Affair Movement Li Hong-Zhang (1836-1901) pointed out and attempted to battle against. This debasement of machines, however, does not necessarily run against the aforementioned basic *machinic* relation between *Dao* and *Qi*. On the contrary, it is exactly based on this relation that the moral opposition between *Dao* and *Qi* is constructed. It is about the vice of “*excessiveness*.” Indeed, it is the *fear of creative evolution*, which often proceeds through “*excessiveness*”, mutation, monstrosity or crack, that motivated some of the late Qing officials and intelligentsia to take pains to safeguard “Chinese *Dao*” from “western *Qi*.”

The important questions therefore are – What is the boundary between *excessive* technology and non-excessive ones? This distinction is not as simple as that between natural and artificial. It is indeed a political question. Why is music as *Qi* of *Dao* not only non-excessive, but the organ or machinic carrier of *Dao*? According to *Lu Shi Chun Qiu*, “*excessive music*” 侈樂 *Chi-Yue* (extravagant music) appears when *Dao* (as the principle) is forgotten and the nation declines. As such, the name “*Dao*”, originally a

name of convenience for the *virtual* Whole required a seemingly *moral-epistemological* connotation and was transformed to the 理 *Li* “principle” of the universe. This discursive confusion of *Dao* and *Li* was especially obvious in *Li Xue* [the Studies of Principle] of Song and Ming dynasties. In modern Chinese, *Dao-Li* has become a common term that refers to the rationale or reasonableness. However, *Dao* and *Li* are not synonyms. Simply to put it, *Li* is *Dao* with a *moral* connotation. Or *Li* is a *humanized Dao*.

As I emphasize, *Dao* and *Qi* are on the same ontological plane, even though *Dao* has been imposed a *moral* connotation with *Li* (the principle), and *Qi* is often connected to the negative connotation with *Ji* (the machine). Some philosophers however more than others insist on the ontological primacy of *Dao* as the moral principle of human existence. Zhu Xi (1130-1200) in the Song dynasty, who is often called the “great synthesizer” of *Li Xue* [the Studies of Principle], insisted that

There are *Li* (principle) and *Qi* (energy)¹⁸ in the universe. *Li* is the metaphysical *Dao*, the foundation of generating things. *Qi* (energy) is the physical *Qi* (utensil), the implement of generating things. Therefore, the birth of humans and things must accord with this *li* and acquire the nature; it must accord with this *Qi* (energy) and acquires the form. Although their nature and form are in the same body, the

¹⁸ Both Chinese words 器(utensil) and 氣(energy) are pronounced as *Qi*. In this section, the subject-matter is the relationship between *Dao* and *Qi* (utensil). In the following discussion, *Qi* will refer to 器 when not indicated.

distinction of *Dao* and *Qi* (utensil) must not be blurred.

天地之間有理有氣，理也者，形而上之道也，生物之本也；氣也者，形而下之器也，生物之具也。是以人物之生，必稟此理，然後有性，必稟此氣，然後有形，其性其形雖不外乎一身，然其道器之間分際甚明，不可亂也。¹⁹

For Zhu Xi, as well as for his predecessor Cheng Yi, “nature is the principle” [性即理 *Xing Ji Li*].²⁰ The 性理 *Xing-Li* “nature-principle” is the general concept for the ontological substance, and *at the same time*, the moral principle for the devaluation of things and humans. Here “nature” 性 *Xing* refers to the nature of *humans* as the highest form among all things. *Li Xue* inherited the humanist tradition of Confucianism. The relationship between *Li* and *Qi* (energy), based on the distinction between *Dao* and *Qi*, as manifested respectively in nature and form, is like the inside and outside of the body. The constant movement of energy brings forth the boundaries of the bodies, both human and non-human, while the nature of the body remains the principle of its structure and function. *Qi* (energy), which is understood as the movement of *Ying* and *Yang*, is the *Qi* (utensil) or “the implement of generating things.” And *Dao-Li* is the “foundation of

¹⁹ Zhu Xi (1130-1200) 朱熹, “In response to Huang Dao-Fu” in *Zhu Wen Gong Wen Ji* Vol. 58 (Collection of Zhu Xi’s Essays). 〈答黃道夫書〉, 《朱文公文集》第五十八卷。Quoted in Jin, Chun-Feng. 金春峰. “The distinction between Xin (Mind) and Xing (Nature) in the Song-Ming Studies of Li.” 〈宋明理學中的心性概念之分疏及其引發的問題〉. <http://www.hfu.edu.tw/~ph/BC/5th/bc0534.htm>.

²⁰ See Liu, Gui-Biao. 劉桂標. 1996. “*Tian Dao* in Cheng Yi’s Commentary of *Yi Jing* (*I Ching*)” 〈《周易程氏傳》中的天道思想〉。人文月刊。
<http://www.arts.cuhk.edu.hk/~hkshp/thesis/h96-106.txt>.

generating things.” The inside/outside relationship between the body’s nature and its form runs a close affinity to the relationship between *Ti* and *Yong*, as in “Chinese learning as substance and Western learning as function” in the late nineteenth century China. As a matter of fact, the Chinese term 體 *Ti* which is translated as “substance” here or “essence” by others, can also be translated as the “body” or rather, the “nature of the body.” The body in the above quote “their nature and form are in the same body” is 身 *Shen*. The two characters 身體 *Shen-Ti* constitute the common term for the body in colloquial Chinese. *Yong* (function, uses or practice) is not outside of *Ti* (substance, body or nature), it is the outside of *Ti*, just Like *Qi* (energy) is the outside of *Li* (principle). Here Zhu Xi upholds a quasi-dualism and asserts that this inside/outside distinction “must not be blurred.”

It is because of the conflation of *Dao-Li* as the ontological virtual Whole and *Dao-Li* as the moral principle, that Zhu’s doctrine lapses into the fixation of the boundaries of bodies. As such, *Dao* is transformed from the immanent cause-field into the transcendental principle of things, or the “first principle”. Therefore, Zhu claims: “There is only *Li* before the existence of the universe. As long as there is the *Li*, there is the universe. There would not be a universe if the *Li* did not exist.” (italics added)[未有天地之先，畢竟也只有理。有此理即有此天地，若無此理則無此天地。]²¹

Contra Zhu Xi, Cheng Yi suggests in his commentary on *I Ching* that “Substance and function come from the same origin. There is no interval between the overt and the

²¹ Zhu Xi (1130-1200) 朱熹, *Zhu Zhi Yu Lei*. 《朱子語類》卷第一。
<http://ef.cdpa.nsysu.edu.tw/ccw/01/gz00.htm>.

latent. ' [體用一源，顯微無間]²² That is to say, the substance is the latent *Dao*, the function is the overt *Qi* [utensil], and there is no *interval* between them in terms of time and space. For Cheng Yi, unlike Zhu Xi, there is no *before* or *after* in terms of their coming to existence, and no absolute primacy of either one in terms of the origin. They always come together. The question of “origin” itself becomes irrelevant. Between the overt and the latent, however, there is the fluid movement of *Ying* and *Yang*, in which things are forming and becoming, and which I would like to call a “*virtual space of evolution*.” It is *virtual* because there is not any *actual* space or interval between the overt *Qi* and the latent *Dao*. They are on the same plane of consistency, to use the Deleuzian term. And by “evolution” I do not refer to the linear evolution of “life” or living systems, but to the constant heterogeneous evolution that traverses all things.

Based on the above discussion we can assert that the ontological primacy of *Dao* and its humanized (epistemologicalized) *Li* over *Qi* is questionable. And this primacy is not without political consequences. Wang Chuan-Shan (1619-1692) in the late Ming and early Qing period was the first Chinese philosopher to say that the *Dao* only exists in(side) the *Qi*, 道在器中 *Dao Zai Qi zhong*. Some call him a “materialist.” Many reformers in the late Qing period, such as Liang Qi-Chao who was a major advocate of adopting western laws and politics as public *Qi* (of evolution), found the seed of democracy in Wang’s radical challenge of the reified notion of *Dao*, which no doubt was often used as rhetoric against political reform.

²² See Liu, Gui-Biao. 劉桂標. 1996. “*Tian Dao* in Cheng Yi’s Commentary of *I Ching*” 〈《周易程氏傳》中的天道思想〉。
<http://www.arts.cuhk.edu.hk/~hkshp/thesis/h96-106.txt>.

There is only *Qi* in the world. What we call *Dao*, is always the *Dao* of *Qi*. But we cannot say that *Qi* is the *Qi* of *Dao*. Humans always say that there is no *Qi* without *Dao*. But in so far as there is *Qi*, do we have to worry about there is no *Dao*?

天下惟器而已矣。道者器之道；器者，不可謂之道之器也。無其道則無器，人類能言之。雖然苟有其器矣，豈患無道哉？²³

This passage completely turns away from any claim of the ontological primacy of *Dao*. It makes explicit the immanent nature of *Dao*. According to Wang Chuan-Shan, *Dao* is not the “origin” of universe, nor the metaphysical principle of generating things, nor the “inside” of the body. *Dao* is not even the “Great One.” *Dao* is not the inside of *Qi*, it is inside and *only* inside *Qi*. *Dao* is *immanent* to the things, or *Qi*. As such, the relationship between *Ti* and *Yong* is no longer one determines or dominates another. “Substance and function implicate each other.” [體用相函 *Ti Yong Xiang Han*].²⁴ The relationship between *Ti* and *Yong*, therefore, is about the process of implication and explication, rather than the interaction between two hierarchical planes. This notion of *Dao* as immanent to *Qi* liberates the notion of *Dao* from any anthropocentric moralized delimitation and restriction as the humanized notion of *Li* has imposed on it.

²³ Wang Chuan Shan's *Commentary on Yi Jing (I Ching)*, quoted in Zhou, Xing-Zhi. 周行之. “Tan Si Tong's Studies of Ren and Buddhism”. 〈譚嗣同的「仁學」與佛學〉。 <http://www.hfu.edu.tw/~ph/BC/4th/bc0404.htm>.

²⁴ Wang Chuan Shan (1619-1692) 王船山, “Postscript of Chou Yi” in *Chuan Shan Yi Xue*. 〈周易外傳〉，〈船山易學〉。Quoted in Ling, An-Wu. 林安梧. 1992. “Substance/Function Philosophy of Xiong Shi-Li's *Wei Shi Lun*”, in *Annual of International Studies of Buddhism*. Vol 2. Pp, 380-398. 〈熊十力《唯識論》中體

3. Summary of Dao/Qi and Ti/Yong Relations and the notion of Language as Technology of Bringing Forth the World

According to the above discussion, we can say the following things about the *Dao/Qi* relation and the corresponding *Ti/Yong* distinction, which informed the late Qing principle of (minimum) westernization -- “Chinese learning as substance (*Ti*). Western learning as function (*Yong*)”.

1. In terms of the *movement* of *Dao*, that is *Tai Ji* 太極 or movement of *Ying* and *Yang*, *Ti* can be interpreted as the cosmological movement, and *Yong* the concrete movement. There is no absolute *inside* and *outside* in the constant movement of *Tai Ji*. Therefore, Cheng Yi asserts that there is no interval between the overt (function) and the latent (substance). The issue here is the *differential velocities* of the fluid movement, and not the interval of a supposedly linear movement.

2. In terms of *Qi* as the *organ* of *Dao*, and *Li* (principle) and *Qi* (energy) as the inside/outside of the same body, *Ti* can be interpreted as the nature or structure of the body, and *Yong* the use or function of the organ. This relationship can always slip into the metaphor of organism. The paradox of Zhu Xi’s privileging of the metaphysical *Dao* as the foundation of generating things over *Qi* (utensil) as the implement of generating things, lies in his assertion that “the nature and form are in the *same body*.” This version of interpretation appears to be particularly

用哲學的思考支點》，《國際佛學研究年刊第二期》，1992年12月，頁380-398。

important for my purpose here in light of the important issue of “culture transplant” (cultural *organ/gene* transplant) in the New Culture Movement discourse.

3. In terms of the *immanence* of *Dao*, *Dao* is always the *Dao of Qi*, and *Ti* and *Yong* implicate each other. In Wang Chuan-Shan’s interpretation, the hierarchical opposition between metaphysical and physical is flattened down to one plane. The movement on this plane is not of organization but of formation (of *Qi*). *Dao* does not exist before the formation of *Qi*. In this sense, this notion of *Qi* is comparable to the Heideggerean notion of *techné*, the Greek word for craft, or technology in the broad sense. *Qi* “brings forth” *Dao*, just as *techné* “brings forth” the truth, and reveals Being.

4. In terms of the notion of *evolution*, I argue that there is a “*virtual* space of evolution” between *Dao* and *Qi*, that is the fluid movement of *Ying* and *Yang*, in which things are created and becoming. It is a *virtual* space because there is not any *actual* space or interval between the overt (*Qi* and *Xiang*, phenomena) and the latent (*Dao-Li*). This dynamic notion of evolution is crucial because it points to the *performativity* of *Qi*, and the corresponding notion of *Dao* as a field of composition in which *Qi* performs. This specific notion of evolution, which is implicit in the traditional *Dao/Qi* relation, as I would like to suggest, as well as the modern version of linear evolutionism imported from the West, theoretically grounded the Chinese appropriation of “western learning” (including industrial technology, politics, laws, and language) as *Qi* of evolution. Moreover, it is the *performativity* of *Qi* that would make it impossible to maintain the originally intended strict

dichotomy between *Ti* and *Yong* in the late Qing period.

Before I go on to discuss the use of *Ti/Yong* distinction in the late Qing (1840-1911) and the early Republic periods (1911-), I want to insert a brief discussion of the Heideggerean notion of *techné*, and the corresponding notion of language as technology, and their relevance for this study. According to Heidegger, the essence of technology is nothing technological.²⁵ It is in the Greek notion of *techné* that Heidegger finds the essence of technology as a mode of revealing (the truth), or rather a *bringing-forth* (of Being, and new things).²⁶ On the other hand, modern technology, the technology in the narrow sense, has been restricted to the practice of ordering, or *Ge-Stell* (Emframing), exclusively as standing-reserves to be commanded. And more importantly, this restricted mode of ordering revealing tends to not only conceal other modes of revealing (as in artwork, painting, music, literature and poetry and etc.), but also conceal the very mode of revealing as *bringing-forth*.²⁷

Language as a particular mode of *techné*, a *bringing-forth*, has a special position among the variety of modes of revealing.

It is because language is the house of Being, that we reach what it by constantly going through this house. When we go to the well, when we go through the woods, we are always already going through the

²⁵ See Heidegger, Martin. 1970. *Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*. NY: Harper and Row. P, 35

²⁶ Heidegger, Martin. 1970. P. 13.

²⁷ Heidegger, Martin. 1970. P. 19-20; P. 27.

word “well,” through the word “woods,” even if we do not speak the words and do not think of anything relating to language.²⁸

Language speaks the words for us whenever we, even silently, go through the things. Language does not just link the words and the things together. Language *allows* the things disclose themselves to man as “beings.”²⁹ As such, language built a house of Being *for* man. To be more specific, language is the house of Being *dwelt by man*.³⁰ Men are dwellers in the world that has been set up by the work, including and especially the linguistic work. The “world” is never a given, but has to be set up from the earth, and set forth into motion. In this process, the language that *allows* man to set up the world through the linguistic work plays a crucial role. Heidegger asserts that “language remains the master of man.” It is language that *allows* man, language that speaks man, not the other way around. Language as a special kind of *techné*, or *Qi*, therefore, can be understood as the mode of bringing forth (the truth) par excellence. This point is highly relevant for my purpose here, because the project of westernization in the early twentieth century China would appear to move from the adoption of western (industrial) technology in the narrow sense to the adoption of *western language as the technology of thinking and dwelling in the modern world, and more importantly, of bringing forth a new (modern) China*.

²⁸ See Heidegger, Martin. 1971. *Poetry, Language, Thought*. NY: Harper and Row. P, 132.

²⁹ Heidegger, Martin. 1971. P. 74.

³⁰ Heidegger, Martin. 1971. Pp145 –161 “Building, Dwelling and Thinking.”

4. From “Substance versus Function” to “Chinese Foundation and Western Supplement”

Let us return to the uses of the *Ti/Yong* distinction as the safeguard of the Chinese spirit in the late Qing period. During the thirty four years of Foreign Affair Movement 洋務運動 *Yang Wu Yun Dong* (1860-1894), also called “Self-Strengthening Movement” 自強運動 *Zi Qiang Yun Dong*, besides the basic war technology proposed by Wei Yuan, the “foreign affairs” officially set into motion included three categories: war technology (military industry, establishment of marine, etc.), general industry (railroads, postal service, banking, mineral industry, etc.), and professional education (sending students to study aboard, establishment of professional military schools, and translation of western thought, mostly restricted to the natural sciences.). As such, most of these “Foreign Affairs” were elements of the “infrastructure”, and the “superstructure” remained intact.³¹ At that time, even the necessity of learning the western industrial technology was not accepted without a fight, in terms of both the continual defeat in the following wars with foreign countries and the discursive fight for the necessity of reform.

One of the leading officials of Foreign Affair Movement Li Hong-Zhang (1836-1901) wrote in 1864:

³¹ Many have questioned the analytical power of the Marxist scheme of infrastructure and superstructure. Raymond Williams for instance argues that the use of terms like infrastructure and superstructure in Marx’s works are not primarily conceptual, but “*metaphorical*”. See Williams. 1977. *Marxism and Literature*.. Oxford: Oxford University Press. P, 76. Indeed, we would find it difficult to locate some social elements into this scheme. Technology is one of these elements, especially when it

I believe that “exhaustion leads to change, and change leads to unobstructed-ness.” ... Some sneer at the foreign *Li Qi* (sharp technology) and see it as excessive strange skills that we do not have to learn. Others are astonished at the foreign *Li Qi* and see it as monstrous magic that we must not learn. ... I believe that if China want to improve herself, the best way is to learn the foreign *Li Qi*; if we want to learn the foreign *Li Qi*, the best way is to find the *Qi* that produces *Qi*.

鴻章竊以爲天下事窮則變，變則通。... 無事則嗤外國之利器爲奇技淫巧，以爲不必學；有事則驚外國之利器爲變怪神奇，以爲不能學 ... 鴻章以爲中國欲自強，則莫如學習外國利器；欲學習外國利器，則莫如覓制器之器。³²

Here Li Hong-Zhang talked about the Chinese common contempt and fear of “the foreign *Li Qi*” [外國之利器] which was seen as excessive, monstrous, “witchery” and therefore not the honorable way (正道 *Zheng Dao*, or the “correct way”). Likewise, Feng Qui-Fen (1809-1874), one of the earliest advocates of western learning, had to write: “Militarism [of the west] is not the saint’s *Dao*, we would not have to learn [...]”³³ China *would not have to* learn the western “sharp technology” if it had not been

involves more and more cultural, artistic and relational arrangements.

³² Li Hong-Zhang. 李鴻章. 1864. “Letter to Prince Gong Qin”, <江蘇巡撫李鴻章致書恭親王奕訢>。

³³ Quoted in Lu, Shi-Qiang. 呂實強. “On the Nature of Foreign Affairs Movement” in

defeated constantly and faced the danger of “being carved up like a melon” 瓜分 *Gua Fen*, a common phrase at that time of national survival crisis. What their generation of Chinese intellectuals and/or officials had witnessed was the historical necessity of learning western technology. “The *Qi* that produces *Qi* ” 制器之器 *Zhi Qi Zhi Qi*, which Li Hong-Zhang mentioned above in the quote, refers to the education of Chinese professionals who know how to produce the sharp technology. That is the education of western technology. The “Capital Common Language School” [京師同文館 *Jing Shi Tong Wen Guan*] established in 1862 was the first official school dedicated to the translation of western works, mostly technical or industrial works. The translation of social sciences had to wait until 1895 when social reformers began to establish many other publishers dedicating to a broader translation and introduction of western thought in general. In the period of Foreign Affairs Movement, the translation was restricted to technology in the narrow sense.³⁴

The phrase “exhaustion leads to change, and change leads to unobstructed-ness” [窮則變，變則通 *Qiong Ze Bian, Bian Ze Tong*] in the above long quote from Li Hong-Zhang is a well known Chinese phrase, originally quoted from *I Ching*. In the late Qing period, this popular saying became the banner of the argument for social and political change. The historical *necessity* of change was at the center of the early discourse of reform. I am talking about 變法之議 *Bian Fa Zhi Yi*, which literally

Collections of Institute of Modern History of Academia Sinica No. 23 (June 1994). Pp, 71-89. <論洋務運動的本質>, 《中央研究院近代史研究所集刊》第二十期 (June 1991). P, 73.

means “the suggestion of changing the law.” In Chinese and in this context, however, “changing the law” does not just refer to the juridical level in the narrow sense, but refers to political, social and economic institutions in general. 變法 *Bian Fa*, “change the law”, was by no mean a new term. In Chinese history, there have been several famous examples of *Bian Fa*. Among them, the earliest and perhaps the most radical and famous is *Shang Yang Bian Fa* in the Pre-Qin period (BC 356-350). Regardless of the scope, all historical examples of *Bian Fa* were empowered and supported by the emperor. That is why the leading figure of 商鞅變法 *Shang Yang Bian Fa*, Shang Yang, was soon executed after his emperor died and the former prince, who was once severely punished because of Shang’s “everyone is equal before the law” principle, succeeded to the throne. However, the *scope* of *Bian Fa* was significant. In the late Qing period, the scope of *Bian Fa* itself marked the difference between those who were official figures of Foreign Affair Movement and those who were intelligentsia without offices – some of them were imprisoned or executed in the tragic 戊戌變法 *Wu Xu Bian Fa* in 1898, also called “One Hundred Day Reform” 百日維新 *Bai Ri Wei Xin* because it only lasted for one hundred days. Unlike *Wu Xu Bian Fa*, Foreign Affair Movement was an officially approved project. Its scope was narrowed down to “mere technologies.” In general, “Chinese learning as substance, Western learning as function” has been attributed to the officials in charge of Foreign Affair Movement. Here I suggest that Foreign Affair Movement as the “minimum” *Bian Fa* can be interpreted as a discursive link between the traditional *Ti/Yong* (substance/function) distinction and the formula of

³⁴ The issue of (cultural) translation will be further discussed in the chapter 6.

“Chinese foundation and Western supplement” which would undergo sequent displacement and reversal in the later discursive formation. Let us now take a look at 變法之議 *Bian Fa Zhi Yi* “the suggestion of changing the law” before, during and after the thirty years of Foreign Affair Movement.

In a few decades before, Gong Zi-Zhen (1792-1841) already brought up the idea of *self-reform*, 自改革 *Zi Gai Ge*, and suggested that those who do not engage in self-reform can only end up being replaced.

One ancestor’s law must have its flaw. One thousand persons’ suggestion cannot guarantee perfection. Rather than give the successor the power to reform, it is wiser to engage in self-reform. ... *I Ching* says: “exhaustion leads to change, and change leads to unobstructed-ness, and unobstructed-ness leads to permanency.”

一祖之法無不敝，千夫之議無不靡。與其贈來者以徑改革，孰若自改革? ... 《易》曰：「窮則變，變則通，通則久」。³⁵

Likewise, in 1861, Feng Qui-Fen (1809-1874) critiqued Wei Juan’s “Learn from the foreigners’ strength in order to restrict the foreigners.” [師夷之長以制夷], and proposed that China must engage in *self-strengthening* or the improvement of self-

³⁵ See Gong, Zi-Zhen. 龔自珍(1792-1841). 1998 (1815-1816). “Yi Bing Zhi Ji Zhu Yi Di Qi” in *The Unfinished Revolution: 100 anniversary of Wu-Xu*. Eds. by Long, Ying-Tai and Zhu Wei-Zheng. Taipei: Shang-Wu Press. Pp, 1-2. 〈乙丙之際籌議第七〉，收錄於《未完成的革命：戊戌百年紀》，龍應台、朱維錚編注。台北：商務出版社。

strength 自強 *Zi Qiang*.³⁶ Both Gong's *self-reform* and Feng's *self-strengthening* suggested the need for an active self-transformation instead of passive defense against the "other." The founder of one of the earliest Chinese newspapers, *Xun Huan Ri Bao* [循環日報], Wang Tao (1828-1897) called this kind of active self-transformation the "Dao of Changes" 變通之道, instead of mere reaction to the West and the learning of the "mere" *Qi* (according to a obviously derogatory notion of technology). In this process, western learning, whether it is western law or technology, was generally considered as the "active ingredient" to be fused into the Chinese body or substance. Feng Qui-Fen suggested that,

Hold Chinese ethics and teachings as the foundation, and supplement it with the skills of power and strength of other countries.

以中國之倫常名教爲原本，輔以諸國富強之術。³⁷

Just as the phrase of "exhaustion leads to change, and change leads to unobstructed-ness, and unobstructed-ness leads to permanency" from *I Ching* has become the banner of the argument for change, the formula of *Chinese foundation and Western supplement* became the motif of self-transformation in the late nineteenth century China. The historical unfolding of this formula, however, would appear to be an increasing

³⁶ See Lu, Shi-Qiang. 呂寶強. "On the Nature of Foreign Affairs Movement" in *Collections of Institute of Modern History of Academia Sinica* No. 23 (June 1994). Pp, 71-89. <論洋務運動的本質>, 《中央研究院近代史研究所集刊》第二十期 (June 1991). Pp, 73-76.

³⁷ See Feng, Qui-Fen. 馮桂芬. 1998b [1860]. *Jiao-Bin Lu Protest: On the Adoption of the Western Learning*. Zheng Zhou: Middle State Ancient Books Press. 《校邠廬抗議采西學議》, 鄭州：中州古籍出版社。P, 211.

expansion of the scope of western learning and the relative shrinking of Chinese learning.

In his famous and/or notorious essay “Western Learning” published in 1881, a “cultural broker” Zheng Guan-Ying (1842-1922) defined Chinese learning as mainly “human studies”, and western learning as “merely knowledge.” “The strength of the West is at the learning, not at the people.” [泰西之強 強於學而非強於人也].³⁸ By making this distinction between human and knowledge, Zheng applied a certain version of the traditional *Dao/Qi* [principle/technology] distinction to an extreme extent, and transformed it into the opposition between human/non-human. In this dualistic framework, the western learning was regarded as something not only *supplementary* to Chinese learning, but ontologically *subordinate* to Chinese learning as the “Human Learning.”

The foundation of western learning is the studies of science and manufacture. And language and literature are only secondary to it. In sum, Chinese learning is the foundation, and Western learning is the secondary.

以西學言之，如格致製造等學，其本也。語言文字其末也。合而

³⁸ See Zheng, Guan-Ying. 鄭觀應. (1842-1922). 1998 (1881). “Western Learning” (“Xi Xue”) in *The Unfinished Revolution: 100 anniversary of Wu-Xu*. Eds. by Long, Ying-Tai and Zhu Wei-Zheng. Taipei: Shang-Wu Press. Pp, 81-85. <西學>，收錄於《未完成的革命：戊戌百年紀》，龍應台、朱維錚編注。台北：商務出版社。P, 84.

言之，中學其本也，西學其末也。³⁹

There was an obvious hierarchical typology in the above quote. On the one hand, by defining the studies of science and manufacture as the (empirical) foundation of the western learning, this typology ontologically subordinates western learning to Chinese learning. Indeed, it argued that the *origin* of the western learning must be found in ancient China. [This is the notorious theory of the “Chinese origin of western learning” 西學中源說 *Xi Xue Chong Yuan Shuo*.] As “human studies”, Chinese learning was not only the (spiritual) foundation of Chinese self-transformation, but was also said to be the (ontological) foundation of western learning. The definition of western learning as something secondary to “human studies” presented it as *something value-neutral*, and therefore could be *taken* as a safe supplement to the Chinese foundation. This “mechanical” conception of the western learning would be forcefully critiqued by the later generation of New Culture Movement. Indeed, the New Cultural Movement activists would appear to *displace* the whole set of relationships of foundation and supplement, even cancelling it at some point, and recognize the western “language(s) and literature” as the foundation or rather the *origin* or *source* of the western strength. The implication of this critique and reversal will be discussed in the following sections. Here it suffices to say that Zheng’s version of western learning exerted great influence upon both the officials and reformers in the late Qing period. No matter how it was ridiculed by the later generations, Zheng’s zealous defense of Chinese learning as the foundation (*Dao*) and the same zealous advocacy of western learning as necessary

³⁹ Zheng, Guan-Ying. 鄭觀應. (1842-1922). 1998 (1881). Pp, 84-85.

supplementary (*Qi*) embodied the mainstream ideology of reform at that time.

Another leading figure of Foreign Affair Movement Zhang Zhi-Dong (1809-1874) wrote in 1898, a few years after the movement failed, and right after the tragic event of *Wu Xu Bian Fa* or “One Hundred Day Reform” that,

Rectify Chinese laws in order to serve as the tool of administration.

Adopt western laws in order to serve as the plan of achieving wealth and power.

整頓中法者所以爲治之具也 採用西法者所以爲富強之謀也。⁴⁰

As noted above, the term “laws” here indicated more than the juridical in the narrow sense, but referred to the political, social and economic institutions in general. Here Zhang seemed only repeated the basic formula of *Chinese foundation and Western supplement*. “Adopt western laws in order to mend Chinese laws.” [采西法以補中法之不足]. However, by arguing for the primacy of the western politics over technology, Zhang Zhi-Dong made a start in turning away from the mechanical conception of the western learning set up by Zheng Guan-Ying. According to Zhang, 西法 *Xi Fa*, western laws, includes 西政 *Xi Zheng*, western politics (school, geography, finance, tax, military, law, industry and commerce), and 西藝 *Xi Yi*, western arts (*techné*) (mathematics, fine arts, mineral industry, medicine, sound, light, chemistry, electricity). And the adopting of western politics is more important and urgent than introduction of

⁴⁰ See Zhang Zhi-Dong 張之洞 (1837-1909). “Encouraging Learning” in *Zhang Wen Xiang Gong Wen Ji*. Vol 53. <勸學篇>, 《張文襄公全集》卷53。

western technic as the strategy and method of saving China from the bad time. [救時之計，謀國之方，政尤急於藝].⁴¹ As a *strategy*, western politics, as well as western laws in general, was defined as belonging to the *outside* (of the spirit), as opposed to the Chinese learning as the cultivation of one's *inside*. [曰中學爲內，西學爲外。學中學治身心，學西學應世事].⁴² When applying the inside/outside framework of traditional *Ti/Yong* (substance/function) distinction, however, the Chinese learning retreated to the personal, inner and spiritual core, while the western learning became the general “strategy” living in the world. Zhang did not want to abandon the basic/official formula of *Chinese foundation and Western supplement*, but only ended up making the supposed foundation the tiny *core*, something as the spiritual seed, and the supplement the *flesh* of the fruit.

5. The Strategy of Universalism and the Western Law as the “Public Qi” for the World

The retreat of Chinese “substance” to the ever shrinking inner core of Chinese self-transformation would at some point result in the apparent disappearance of Chinese identity, as the May Fourth Movement at its most radical moment manifested. This

⁴¹ Ibid. Also see Zhao, Xiao-Lei. 趙曉雷. 1989. “On the revolutionary and traditional Nature of Zhang Zhi-Dong’s ‘Encourage Learning’” in *Monthly Journal of History* 1989 vol. 6, pp.51-55. <論張之洞《勸學篇》的革命性和傳統性>，《史學月刊》一九八九年第六期。

⁴² See Zhang Zhi-Dong 張之洞 (1837-1909). “Encouraging Learning” in *Zhang Wen Xiang Gong Wen Ji*. Vol 53. <勸學篇>，《張文襄公全集》卷53。

apparent “disappearance”, however, was rather a discursive and rhetoric reorganization of the boundaries between Chinese and Western cultures. The Foreign Affairs Movement generation tended to use the traditional *Ti/Yong* distinction to discursively frame the boundaries between the Chinese and western. When the notion of *Ti* or Chinese spirit became an ever retreating horizon, however, the *Ti/Yong* distinction itself started to break down and the strategy of universalizing the West came to the foreground. That is to say, the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Chinese intelligentsia employed the discourse of universalism which emphasizes the “universal applicability” of certain ideas from the modern West to argue for a more radical project of *Bian Fa* [changing the law], that is, a more radical project of self-transformation.

The leading figure of *Wu Xu Bian Fa*, Kang You-Wei. (1858-1927) applied the Euclidean notion of the axiom to his ideal political and human relationships in one of his major works, *Real Principles and Universal Laws* (written from 1885 to 1891).

Universal Laws. Human beings have the right of autonomy. *Note:*
This is the law out of the geometric axiom, and totally corresponds to the Real Principles – “Every human being shares the original substance of the universe” and “Every human being has a soul ”--,
and therefore is the best law for the Human Dao. ... Ratio: Accord
with the idea of discrimination, and use the law set up by man. Note:
Since the origin of the geometric axiom is lost here, the laws used are
set up by common men and therefore are seldom precise.

公法 人有自主之權。按：此為幾何公理所出之法，與人各分天地原質以為人及各具一魂之實理全合，最有益於人道。... 比例：

以等差之意，用人立之法。按：此於幾何公理之本源既失，則其所用諸凡人立之法，亦必鮮精者。⁴³

In the above quote, Kang attempted to establish a universal ethical system by stripping away any historical and cultural specificities from social relations and political institutions. The western mathematical notion of *axiom* was employed to neutralize the cultural differences that others emphasized in their resistance to adopting western political ideals and thought. Further, the mathematical notion of *ratio* was used to indicate certain cultural inclinations or partiality, that already deviate from the “geometrical axiom.” “*The law out of the geometric axiom*” was “*the best law for the Human Dao*” exactly because they were free from human prejudices and discrimination. While “*the laws used are set up by common men*” were inevitably biased. Kang did not explain *how* the “real principles” were deduced, and how the cultural ratio was calculated, but only secretly assumed the universality of certain western political ideals, like individual autonomy, equality, and humanism. Here Kang seemed an advocate of “complete westernization.” This strategy of universalizing the West would be further enhanced in two decades later by the New Culture Movement intellectuals, while Kang You-Wei himself would become one of their number one enemies labeled as “cultural reactionaries.” Since the 1910’s, Kang started to engage in the preservation of Chinese “national essence” [國粹 *Guo Cui*] in general and the establishment of “Society of

⁴³ See Kang, You-Wei. 康有為(1858-1927). 1998[1891]. “Selection from *The Book of Real Principles and Universal Law*” in *The Unfinished Revolution: 100 anniversary of Wu-Xu*. Eds. by Long, Ying-Tai and Zhu Wei-Zheng. Taipei: Shang-Wu Press. Pp, 97-106. <《實理公法全集》節錄>，收錄於《未完成的革命：戊戌百年紀》，

Confucian Religion” [孔教會 *Kong Jiao Hui*] in particular. However, he did not abandon the ideal of universalism. Instead, he turned to Confucianism and Buddhism for a theoretical and deductive foundation. In *The Book of Great Unity* [*Da Tong Shu* 大同書] published in 1913, Kang presented his philosophy of history. He transformed the traditional doctrine of “Three Ages” --- chaos, increasing peace, and great peace --- into an evolutionary theory, and made the Confucian ideal of “Great Unity” [大同 *Da Tong*, literally Great Same-ness] a universalistic blueprint. Traditionally, the doctrine of “Three Ages” can be interpreted in a cyclical framework, as well as in a linear temporality. When it was interpreted in the linear temporality, however, “the present” was often taken as the end (or goal) of the history. Kang’s, however, was a utopian vision of the future. Kang’s attempt to universalize the ancient Chinese ideal of *Da Tong* and his earlier move of universalizing the modern western values actually constituted the two main strategies of universalism in the early twentieth century China.

A certain version of universalism, which specifically made the West the universal model of modernity for the non-western countries, has been one of the epistemic effects of western capitalist imperialism on non-western countries. It assumes that all cultures or societies have (deep, hidden) structures similar to the west, and therefore what is true in the west must also apply to the non-west. Universalism has become the most common and effective strategy of those who argue for “modernization” and/or “westernization.” Universalism argues for the universality of certain (western) values, such as progress, democracy, individual autonomy, and *evolution*.

龍應台、朱維錚編注。台北：商務出版社。P, 99-100.

Kang's student and one of the survival activists of *Wu Xu Bian Fa*, Liang Qi-Chao (1873-1929) wrote in 1896 about the universality of change, be it voluntary or not.

The law is the public *Qi* in the world. The change is the universal principle of the world. The earth is unobstructed, and one thousand countries are making progress every day. It is the major tendency which can not be repressed. We change whether we are willing to change or not. If we change voluntarily, we control the power of change, we can preserve our country, we can preserve our race, and we can preserve our teaching. If we change involuntarily, we give the power of change away.

法者天下之公器也，變者天下之公理也。大地既通，萬國蒸蒸，日趨於上，大勢相迫，非可關制。變亦變，不變亦變，變而變者，變之權操諸己，可以保國，可以保種，可以保教，不變而變者，變之權讓諸人。⁴⁴

“The change is the universal principle of the world” [變者天下之公理也] was a quote from Liang's teacher Kang You-Wei.⁴⁵ Here Liang was arguing for the necessity of change, and the advantage of *Bian Fa* – active change (of the law) – over the

⁴⁴ See Liang, Qi-Chao. 梁啟超. 1960 [1896] “General Discussion on Change the Law” in *Liang Qi-Chao Collection*. Vol. 1. Taiwan Chung-Hua Press. <變法通議>，《飲冰室文集》第一卷。台灣中華書局印行。P. 8.

⁴⁵ Quoted in Xu Guan-Shan. 許冠山. “Kang Nan-Hai's Theory of Three Ages Evolution” in *The Thought of Modern Chinese Intellectuals: The Late Qing Period*. Taipei: Chinese Times Press. Pp. 525-575. 〈康南海的三世進化論〉收錄於《近代

involuntary, passive change by the others. “The law is the public *Qi* in the world.” The notion of “public *Qi*” refers to the universal applicability of the (western) law. In order to persuade other Chinese intelligentsia to adopt the “new law” (new political system based on a certain western model), Liang employed the strategy of universalizing the west.

The so-called new law is not inherent to the West, but is reformed by the West people. It makes no difference that it is reformed and applied to the West or to the East.

所謂新法者非爲西人所故有，而實爲西人所改造，改而施之西方，與改而施之東方，其情況不殊。⁴⁶

The western political system was stripped away its historical specificity and given a universal value, just as Kang’s “geometrical axiom.” The question then became: if the western law is not inherent to the west, where did it come from? The late Qing diplomatist Xue Fu-Cheng (1838-1894) suggested in his 1880 essay “Change the Law” that the “western” law was not originally western, but came from the “secret of the universe.” It just happened that the western learned the secret before the Chinese.⁴⁷ This kind of viewpoint of course would be ridiculed by the later generations. (It is comparable to Zheng Guan-Ying’s ontological subordination of western learning to

中國思想人物論：晚清思想》。台北：時報出版社。P, 540.

⁴⁶ Ibid. p, 6.

⁴⁷ Xue, Fu-Cheng. 薛福成. 1998[1880]. “Chang the Law” in The Unfinished Revolution: 100 anniversary of Wu-Xu. Eds. by Long, Ying-Tai and Zhu Wei-Zheng. Taipei: Shang-Wu Press. Pp, 68-71. <變法>，收錄於《未完成的革命：戊戌百年

Chinese learning discussed in the last section) But what is more important is, *the notion of “the universe”, or “the heaven” played a crucial role in the discursive work of transforming the western values into the universal values.* This is probably why when Yan Fu translated Huxley’s *Evolution and Ethics* in 1895, he gave the Chinese title 天演論 *Tian Yan Lun*, meaning *On Heavenly Evolution*. Unlike Xue’s mysticism and Kang’s utopianism and his later turn to Confucianism, however, Liang later argued for a more radical change of Chinese social-political order. He argued against Kang’s “Society of Confucian religion.”

Besides the strategy of universalizing and (culturally) neutralizing the western values, we can also find an optimistic element of *cosmopolitanism* in Kang’s “the law out of the geometrical axiom” or the ideal of “Great Unity”, Liang’s “unobstructed earth”, and other texts arguing for the change of the law. Wang Tao (1828-1897) wrote in his “Chang the Law and Self-Strengthening” that “the planet would become one family” one hundred year later – precursing the now fashionable notion of planetary village.⁴⁸ In these universalists’ vision of future, the direction of change/evolution was the true realization of true cosmopolitanism.⁴⁹ For them, that was the universalist *value*

紀》，龍應台、朱維錚編注。台北：商務出版社。P,70.

⁴⁸ Wang, Tao. 王韜 (1828-1897). 1998 (1874-). “Chang the Law and Self-strengthening” in *The Unfinished Revolution: 100 anniversary of Wu-Xu*. Eds. by Long, Ying-Tai and Zhu Wei-Zheng. Taipei: Shang-Wu Press. Pp, 77-80. <變法自強>，收錄於《未完成的革命：戊戌百年紀》，龍應台、朱維錚編注。台北：商務出版社。P, 80.

⁴⁹ I will discuss the trans-creative nature of early modern Chinese cosmopolitanisms in chapter 5.

of evolution. Indeed, *evolution itself became a moral value*. This point would remain true for the New Culture Movement generation, as we would see in the following sections.

6. The Strategy of Evolutionism and Written Language as the Qi of Artificial Evolution

From the above discussion, it is not difficult to see that the spatial distinction of China/Western tended to be displaced by the temporal order of old/new. Modernization theory was becoming orthodoxy within the social sciences and American “policy ideology” in the 1950’s held a similar view about “development.”⁵⁰ The west was, and oftentimes still is still, constructed as the future of China (or other non-western countries). What is perhaps more important was, however, that this displacement was activated through a discursive operation of universalism – i.e., certain western values and social arrangements were theoretically universalized or culturally neutralized and *thereby* became transplantable, at least theoretically, to other social and cultural contexts without creating too much intrusion. The strategy of universalism was transformed to that of evolutionism by positing the image of a universalized West at the higher level in a *linear* order of modern temporality. As such, “western learning” and “new learning” were often used interchangeably, so were “western laws” and the “new law.” In the late Qing period, the term “new” was at first simply used to mark certain

⁵⁰ See Michael H. Hunt. 2000. *Modernization Theory: American Social Science and “Nation Building” in the Kennedy Era*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

difference from the existing “old” Chinese social and political order. Then the *Bian Fa* argument of Kang, Liang and the others, replaced the term “western” with “new” in order to neutralize the cultural and historical specificities of certain values.

Bian, change, had already been the main theme in the late Qing period before the western notion of evolution came into play, as Gong Zi-Zhen’s (1792-1841) idea of *self-reform*, 自改革 *Zi Gai Ge* suggested. Whether and how much Kang You-Wei’s evolutionary picture in *The Book of Great Unity* was influenced by Yan Fu’s translation of Thomas Huxley’s *Evolution and Ethics* in 1895 was debatable.⁵¹ But it is certain that the notion of evolution was at least a discursive transmitter in Kang’s picture – to transmit what he called the true Confucian doctrine of change into a modern project. However, the readers should note that while Yan Fu translated the term “evolution” into 演化 *Yan Hua*, sometimes and some people translated it into 進化 *Jin Huan*. The Chinese title of Kang’s *Three Ages Evolution* used the latter, not the former. Although these terms are now often used interchangeably in the contemporary Chinese speakers, there are important differences in their implications. 化 *Hua* means “to become” and emphasizes the dynamic process of changing, and is usually used to translate English

⁵¹ Some argue that Kang’s drawing of Confucianism was mainly strategic with an attempt to cover up the western favor of his evolutionary theory and persuade the Chinese government to adopt his suggestions for social reform. The others argue that Kang’s project of evolutionary theory was relatively independent of the western notion of evolution and paralleled with Yen Fu’s theory. See Xu Guan-Shan. 許冠山. “Kang Nan-Hai’s Theory of Three Ages Evolution” in *The Thought of Modern Chinese Intellectuals: The Late Qing Period*. Taipei: Chinese Times Press. Pp, 525-575. 〈康南海的三世進化論〉收錄於《近代中國思想人物論：晚清思想》。台北：時報出版社。Esp., p, 539. Also see Pusey, James Reeve. 1983. *China and Charles Darwin*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. P, 15 ff.

inflection *-ize* or *-ization*, as in another modern key word 西化 *Xi Hua*, westernization. The Chinese character 演 *Yan* in the first translation of evolution, 演化 *Yan Hua*, means *to perform, or to play*, while the character 進 *Jin* in the second translation, 進化 *Jin Huan*, means *to progress, to move forward*. *Yan Hua*, Yan's translation, seemed to grasp the significance of "evolution" better because it escape the much more value-loaded connotation of "progress." Indeed, Kang's theory of *Jin Huan* claimed the historical necessity of "progress" as a *cosmological* principle he established based on certain interpretations of Chinese classics. In his interpretation, Kang used the term *Jin Huan* to transform the traditional cyclical belief of history into a picture of linear development moving toward perfection.

Actually, the Chinese term 進化 *Jin Huan* might be better translated into English as "progress" or "development" rather than as "evolution". On the other hand, 演化 *Yan Hua*, as well as Darwin's notion of evolution, assumes a creation of *differences* in the process – producing a difference from before and from each other, and therefore creating *a space of change*. "Progress" is too often taken as *evolution*, while actually it is only one particular version of evolution, especially when the value of "progress" was culturally neutralized and postulated as universal.

The leading Chinese written language reformer and self-professed "absurdly blind believer of material civilization" [謬妄的物質文明崇信家], Wu Jieng-Heng (Wu Zhi-Hui) (1864 - 1953), claimed China had "to catch up in the line of evolution." [在進化線

上追].⁵² Note that the “evolution” here was *Jin Huan* [progress], not *Yan Hua* [perform]. For him, there was basically only one “line of evolution” of the human.

The contemporary Western material civilization is not western learning. It is the necessary new learning on a certain stage of human evolution.

今日歐美的物質文明並非西學，乃是人類進化階段上應有的新學。⁵³

Here again, the presumed universalism of western culture was used to activate a linear notion of evolution. The ideal of one human race was implied. Indeed, Wu suggested that if we [Chinese] could not catch up with the new stage of human evolution, we would “not be a good human race.”⁵⁴ As such, the moral value-laden *good/bad* distinction secretly displaced the *new/old* distinction. And the no less moral value-laden *strong/weak* distinction was always already there since the late Qing period. Wu would not hesitate to say that, the “Western” was a *better* human race than the Chinese in terms of its position in “the line of (human) evolution.” The western “material civilization” was “the necessary new learning on a certain stage of human evolution” –

⁵² See Wu, Jieng-Heng. 吳敬恆. 1918. “How Do We Improve Chinese Language” in *New Youth* 5(5). Pp, 483-508. <補救中國文字之方法若何>，《新青年》第五卷第五號。P, 505.

⁵³ Ibid., p, 504.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p, 505.

indeed, “a *vocation* of we human race.”⁵⁵ A vocation, 天職 *Tian-Zhi* or heaven-task, means a task which is dictated by heaven. While the shift from *we Chinese* to *we human race* was a universalizing move, the shift from *we human race* back to *we Chinese* was an evolutionizing move that located China’s position in the “line of evolution” and argued for a plan to catch up. Evolution itself was not only a necessity. Evolution became a moral value. We humans *ought to* do it. We Chinese *ought to* catch up. The late Qing formula of “Chinese learning as substance and western learning as function” was dismissed from this perspective. As a strategy to catch up, it was a futile attempt to chase a car by “riding cattle” – that is trying to catch up with a modern *Qi* with a backward, traditional *Qi* [technology]. In terms of language reform, the correct way to catch up with the western was to adopt a European language as the second national language – in order to catch up with a car, one must learn to drive a car.⁵⁶ Apparently, Wu was treating written language as a *means* to achieving the *end* of catching up in the “line of evolution.” As a lifelong written language reformer, once an advocator of Esperanto, and later the official administrator of National Language Movement in the Republic period⁵⁷, Wu approached written language as the *Qi* of evolution, and contributed to the discursive formation of the New Culture Movement.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 505.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 505-506. I will return to this point when I discuss the debate on Chinese written language later.

⁵⁷ See Zhan, Wei. 詹瑋. 1992. *Wu Zhi-Hui and National Movement*. Taipei: Literature, History and Philosophy Press. 《吳秩暉與國語運動》。台北：文史哲出版社。

7. *Artificial Evolution and the Metaphor of Cultural Organism*

The main introducer of the western notion of “evolution” and translator of Thomas Huxley’s *Evolution and Ethics* Yan Fu (1853 - 1921), was a Spencerian rather than a Darwinian. He advocated a certain notion of “culture organism” to criticize the *Ti/Yong* dichotomy in the formula “Chinese substance and Western function.” As we mentioned before, Chinese term 體 *Ti* can also be translated into *body*, and 用 *Yong* into *uses* (of the body and its organs). Yan Fu’s critique was based on the inseparability of body and use in a biological organism.

When we talk about body and use, we must be talking about the body and use of one specific thing. The body of a cow has the use of carrying heavy load. The body of a horse has the use of running a long way. ... Therefore, Chinese learning has its own body and use, and so does western learning. The body and use must not be separated. Otherwise, both Chinese learning and western learning would be dead.

體用者，即一物而言之也。有牛之體，則有負重之用；有馬之體，則有致遠之用。未有聞以牛爲體，以馬爲用者也。... 故中學有中學之體用，西學有西學之體用，分之則兩立，合之則兩亡。⁵⁸

Here Yan employed the organic interpretation of *Ti/Yong* distinction and compares cultural [learning] systems to a biological organism – a horse or a cow. The metaphor of

⁵⁸ Quoted in Sun, Quang-De. 孫廣德. 1985. *The Late Qing Tradition and the Debate about Westernization*. Taipei: Shang-Wu Press. 《晚清傳統與西化的爭論》，台灣商務印書局發行。P, 168.

organism was used to argue against the attempt to adopt western *Yong* without adopting at the same time the western *Ti*. “The body and use must not be separated.” Can we transplant a cow’s capacity of carry heavy load into a horse’s body? Can we transplant the western technology without also adopting the western political system and cultural values? According to Yan’s notion of cultural organism above, the answer is an absolute “no”. This notion of cultural organism introduced the proposal of “complete westernization” of the New Culture Movement generation in the sense that it suggested western learning is a whole package of *Ti* and *Yong*, although Yan did not suggest we abandon Chinese learning.

Think of this question: can we transplant the pig’s heart into a human’s body? Now we are not so sure that the answer is necessarily a “no,” since the science of genetic engineering has made a lot of progress in reducing the biological resistance of organ transplant among individuals from different species. As Donna Haraway suggests, the boundaries between animals, humans and machines are breaking down in the creation of a “cybernetic organism.”⁵⁹ It no longer sounds so absurd to transplant a cow’s organ or “genes” or even “capacity” into a horse’s body, or other way around. Can we say something similar about the *cultural* transplant? *Can we transplant the western heart into the Chinese body or the Chinese heart into a western body* without causing the two wholes to collapse? Or rather, can we even talk about a cultural genetic engineering? These questions concerning the “cultural organ/gene transplant,” might help to

⁵⁹ See Haraway, Donna J. 1991. *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York: Routledge. Especially Chapter 8 “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Social-Feminisr in the Late Twentieth Century.”

understand the postcolonial situation of China and many other non-western countries exposed to the western epistemic violence. As a matter of fact, the debate about the viability of “complete westernization” since the New Culture Movement onwards would embody this postcolonial situation of cultural transplant and /or transformation.

On the other hand, however, the theme of cultural “transplant”, which presupposes the notion of a *given* “organ” (or institutions, laws, customs, writing systems), might not be able to grasp the molecular movement of transformation and translation involved in the process of “transplantation” itself. The cultural “organ”, as *Qi* or *techné*, is never given. In the process of cultural appropriation, not only the Chinese “body” is being transformed, the cultural “organ” supposedly taken from the west is also under transformation, or a “chain of transmutation”, to borrow Bruno Latour’s description of how scientists see “nature.”⁶⁰ It is through a process of translation, which already involves molecular transversal communication between Western and Chinese Cultures – as we see in the aforecited translation of western laws into the *Qi* of Chinese self-transformation – that a certain western cultural “organ” is transformed into resources for the early modern Chinese project of artificial creative evolution.

8. The Critique of Chinese Written Language as the Embodiment and Carrier of Chinese Backwardness

As I discuss above, the lifelong language reformer Wu Jieng-Heng once suggested

⁶⁰ See Latour, Bruno. 1999. *Pandora’s Hope*. Chapter 2 “Circulating Reference: Sampling the Soil in the Amazon Forest.” Harvard University Press.

the adoption of Esperanto as the technology [*Qi*] for China to “catch up in the line of evolution.” In 1907, Wu and the others established in Paris the *新世紀* journal, meaning *New Century* -- the original title was written in Esperanto, *La Tempoj Novaj*.⁶¹ This notion of language as the *Qi* of evolution played a major role in the discursive formation of the New Culture Movement, starting with the establishment of the *New Youth* journal in 1915. During the period 1917 to 1919, in the *New Youth*, there were a series of discussions about the nature of Chinese written language and the possibility of adopting Esperanto or other European languages. Among those who argued for the adoption of Esperanto, the Chinese phonologist Qian Xuan-Tong (1887-1939) probably was the most zealous. Like many others, Wu and Qian believed in the cosmopolitan ideal of a “universal script.” In *New Century*, Wu and his colleagues translated the term “Esperanto”, originally meaning “the hope”, to Chinese as 萬國新語 *Wan Guo Xin Yu*, a “new language of ten thousand countries.” The *New Youth*, on the other hand, following the Japanese translation, translated Esperanto as 世界語 *Shi Jie Yu*, “language of the world.” From these translations, we can see the projection of a cosmopolitan ideal of “universal script.” Hardly surprisingly, Qian and others’ advocacy of Esperanto in the *New Youth* provoked the opposite opinion from many intellectuals. For instance, Tao Lu-Gong pointed out that,

The adoption of *Shi Jie Yu* (Esperanto) does not necessarily lead to the realization of cosmopolitanism. ... Nationality cannot be abolished.

⁶¹ See Zhan, Wei. 詹璋. 1992. *Wu Zhi-Hui and National Movement*. Taipei: Literature, History and Philosophy Press. 《吳秩暉與國語運動》。台北：文史哲出版社。P, 41.

世界語未必即可謂世界主義之實現。... 國民性之不可剪除。⁶²

In response to this, the founder of the *New Youth* Chen Du Xiu suggested that the process of human “evolution” would someday lead to the achievement of cosmopolitanism and the abolition of the so-called “nationality.”

Everything in the world is evolutionary. So is *Shi Jie Yu* (Esperanto).

So is every language. ... For you, Esperanto is the language of no nations. For me, it is the language of human race.

世界萬物皆進化的也。世界語亦然。各國語何莫不然。... 足下

謂世界語爲無民族之語言。僕則謂世界語爲人類之語言。⁶³

As such, the unitary concept of one human race was employed to cancel the historical and cultural specificities of nationality and of any particular language (even though the New Culture Movement can be understood as a nationalist project in the sense that it aimed to create a better Chinese nation). And Esperanto as a particular version of *Shi Jie Yu*, “language of the world,” was taken as the language of the future, that is the imaginary and ideal future of human evolution towards the achievement of cosmopolitanism.

Most commentators who argued against the replacement of the Chinese writing system with Esperanto, like Tao Lu-Gong, emphasized the cultural continuity of language. In contrast, the New Culture Movement activists of the *New Youth* stressed

⁶² Tao, Lu-Gong. 陶履恭. 1917. “Correspondence” in *New Youth* 3(6). Pp,1-4. <通信> , 《新青年》第三卷第六號。P,3.

⁶³ Chen, Du-Xiu. 陳獨秀. 1917. “Correspondence” in *New Youth* 3(6). Pp, 4-5. <通信

the historical necessity of creating a discontinuity from tradition and taking a *leap* to the future. They attempted to ground this necessity on what I would like to call *a discourse of universal evolutionism*, or what Chen Du-Xiu called the “evolutionary (progressive) regularity”, 進化公例 *Jin Hua Gong Li*.⁶⁴ The notion of “evolutionary regularity” was a popular term among Chinese progressive intellectuals at that time. For instance, Zou Rong (1885-1905), a revolutionary against the Qing dynasty, wrote in his memorable *Revolutionary Army* (1903) that,

Revolution is the heavenly evolutionary regularity. Revolution is the worldwide axiom.

革命者，天演之公例。革命者，世界之公理。⁶⁵

Likewise, Liang Qi-Chao employed the notion of “heavenly evolutionary regularity” 天演之公例 *Tain Yan Zhi Gong Li* to describe the historical necessity of international competition for survival. The elimination of the weak nations (such as China) was the “heavenly evolutionary regularity.”⁶⁶ As indicated before, Yan Fu introduced the western theory of evolution into Chinese as “heavenly evolution” in 1895. He was the first one who treated the “heavenly” evolution as a “regularity” 公例, literally meaning

> , 《新青年》第三卷第六號。P,4.

⁶⁴ See Chen, Du-Xiu. 陳獨秀. 1918. “Correspondence: China’s language Problem Nowadays” in *New Youth* 4(4). P, 356. <通信:中國今後之文字問題> , 《新青年》第四卷第四號。

⁶⁵ See Zou, Rong 鄒容(1885-1905). 1954 [1903]. *Revolutionary Army*. Bei-Jing: Zhong Yang Wen Wu Gong Ying She. 《革命軍》。北京：中央文物供應社。.

⁶⁶ See Liang, Qi-Chao. 梁啟超. 1917. “On the New Law of Eliminate Other Nations.”

“public/universal example.” Moreover, as I mentioned above, Kang You-Wei applied the mathematical notion of “axiom” to the discussion of new political ideal and social reform in the early modern China. Both “axiom” and “regularity” were popular terms in the Chinese intellectual circle at the turn of the century. The notion of axiom 公理 *Gong Li* (ㄍㄨㄥ ㄌㄧˋ) and regularity 公例 *Gong Li* (ㄍㄨㄥ ㄌㄧˋ) have similar pronunciations in Chinese. Although the former is deductive, and the latter inductive, they were often used interchangeable. The first character of both notions, 公 *Gong* means public or universal. The connotation of cosmopolitanism was crucial for its popularity in the Chinese progressive/revolutionary circle. As eminent Chinese scholar Zhang Tai-Yan pointed out in 1908, the notions of axiom and evolution had become “sacred” at that time. Therefore, the axiom or regularity of evolution would be even more sacred.

As such, Chen Du-Xiu argued that the abolition of Chinese script as a backward writing system was a “evolutionary (progressive) regularity”, 進化公例 *Jin Hua Gong Li*.⁶⁷ What the proponents of Esperanto in the *New Youth* believed was not so much the merits and applicability of Esperanto itself, but the urgent need for a new writing system which was, according to their understanding of a “scientific” language, suitable for carrying and bringing forth a better civilization in China, i.e., as a better *Qi* (technology) of evolution. As such, it did not matter that Esperanto was a system “dead artificial

〈滅國新法論〉。http://www.millionbook.net/mj/l/liangqichao/.

⁶⁷ See Chen, Du-Xiu. 陳獨秀. 1918. “Correspondence: China’s language Problem Nowadays” in *New Youth* 4(4). P, 356. 〈通信:中國今後之文字問題〉, 《新青年》第四卷第四號。Chen, Du-Xiu. 陳獨秀. 1918. “Correspondence: China’s language Problem Nowadays” in *New Youth* 4(4). P, 356. 〈通信:中國今後之文字問題〉,

signs”⁶⁸, as some opponent pointed out, because what Chinese writing system needed was an *artificial evolution*. As Qian claimed,

The script of evolution must depend on human efforts. And the language of the world must come to be one. I believe that script is just like the signs of measurement, chronology and currency. The more signs are unitary, the less trouble we have to go through.

進化之文字，有賴乎人爲，而世界之語言，必將漸漸統一，因玄同對於文字之觀念，以爲與度量衡，紀年，貨幣等等相同，符號愈統一，則愈可少傷腦筋也。⁶⁹

Like many others at that time, Qian held a pragmatic notion of language (and/or script). For him, basically, language is *just* a semiotic system. And Chinese script was, for them, obviously inappropriate or rather inferior as a system of signs to express thoughts and indicate things. According to Qian, Chinese script as the carrier of the “stupid and confusing history, culture and thought” (昏亂的歷史文字思想) had blocked the Chinese mind and intellect.⁷⁰ What Chinese script was capable of

《新青年》第四卷第四號。

⁶⁸ Zhu, You-Jien (Zhu, You-nong). 朱有昀(朱有農). 1918. “Correspondence: Against Esperanto” in *New Youth* 5(4). Pp, 416-422. <通信:反對世界語>, 《新青年》第五卷第四號。

⁶⁹ See Qian, Xuan-Tong. 錢玄同. 1918d. “Correspondence: on Esperanto” in *New Youth* 4(2). Pp, 173-177. <通信:論世界語>, 《新青年》第四卷第二號。P, 177.

⁷⁰ See Qian, Xuan-Tong. 錢玄同. 1918e. “Correspondence: on Esperanto” in *New Youth* 5(2). Pp, 173-174, 177-178, 182-184. <通信:論世界語>, 《新青年》第五卷第二號。Pp, 173 and 177.

representing was merely “ancient childish thought”, and never the “New World Civilization since Lamark and Darwin onwards.”⁷¹ In sum, I would argue that, for those who argued for the abolition or at least the radical transformation of Chinese script, Chinese writing system was the backward *Qi* (technology) which was the carrier and embodiment of the backward Chinese thought (or rather the Chinese *Ti*, substance). This argument would later lead to a radical project of complete westernization. In a certain sense, this involved a notion of a “cultural organism” that often overlooks the *molecular transversal translation* involved in the process of cultural appropriation.

Qian’s claim that Chinese writing system is *in itself* not capable of carrying new thought and new things, however, engaged in a kind of *linguistic relativism* which was indeed already invalidated by his own radical thinking and proposal. Many radical westernizers fell into the same *linguistic and cultural relativism* when they argued that “complete westernization” was the only way to improve the Chinese mind. In my opinion, it was because they did not consider the possibility of *cultural translation* seriously, even though they already engaged in the practice of cultural translation all the time. I will deal with this issue later, especially in chapter 5 on the discursive relation between “westernization” and “cosmopolitanization” and chapter 6 on “molecular translation.”

But for what reason exactly did these Chinese intellectuals believe that Chinese script was such an unfit system as a carrier of thought and technology of evolution?

⁷¹ See Qian, Xuan-Tong. 錢玄同. 1918a. “Correspondence: China’s language Problem Nowadays” in *New Youth* 4(4). Pp, 350-356. <通信:中國今後之文字問題>, 《新青年》第四卷第四號。P, 352.

Qian enumerated the “weaknesses” of Chinese as a system of signs as follows.

1. Chinese script is monosyllabic.
2. Chinese is a (backward, dead) hieroglyphics.
3. Chinese adjectives and prepositions are *insufficient*.
4. Chinese *lacks* inflection in verbs
5. Chinese is difficult to recognize and write.
6. Ambiguity in meaning.
7. Speech and writing are remote.⁷²

It is not difficult to see that these “weaknesses” were all put forward in relation to the “merits” of the European alphabetical writing as a model of a more scientific system. The dichotomy of hieroglyph versus alphabet implied those between backward and progress, tradition and modern, unscientific and scientific, and Chinese and Western cultures. As a matter of fact, this adoption of European linguistic model was only part of the larger project of *becoming western*, or westernization, as the above discussion showed.

As I briefly discussed in the chapter 1, this critique of Chinese script unwittingly resonates with Hegel’s critique of Chinese writing system as a hindrance to scientific thinking seen as unable to evolve with History and Reason -- what Derrida has called

⁷² See Qian, Xuan-Tong. 錢玄同. 1918c. “Correspondence: on Esperanto” in *New Youth* 5(5). Pp, 524-526; 542-543. <通信:論世界語>, 《新青年》第五卷第五號。P, 542. Also see Qian, Xuan-Tong. 錢玄同. 1918a. “Correspondence: China’s language Problem Nowadays” in *New Youth* 4(4). Pp, 350-356. <通信:中國今後之文字問題>, 《新青年》第四卷第四號。

the “Chinese prejudice.” In the following chapters, I will discuss the critique and reform of Chinese writing in more detail, focusing on the notion of “scientific writing.”

Chapter 3

The Hegeian Alphabetic Prejudice and the Dual Structure of Chinese Character Making

Alphabetic writing is on all accounts the more intelligent: in it the word – the mode, peculiar to the intellect, of uttering its ideas most worthily – is brought to consciousness and made an object of reflection. ... Hieroglyphics, instead of springing from the direct analysis of sensible signs, like alphabetic writing, arise from an antecedent analysis of ideas. A hieroglyphic written language would require a philosophy as stationary as is the civilization of the Chinese. (Hegel 1817 Encyclopaedia sec. 459)

Chinese language, with its meanings so obscure and grammar so imprecise, can only represent ancient primitive thought, and is absolutely incapable of representing the civilization of the new world since Larmark and Darwin. (Qian Xuan-Tong 1918: 352)

1. The Alphabetic Turn in Chinese Linguistic Modernity

As I pointed out in the previous chapter, in the New Culture Movement, the Chinese writing system was forcefully critiqued as the carrier and embodiment of the backward Chinese history, culture and thought. On the other hand, the European model of alphabetic writing was seen as the technology of artificial evolution, which China must adopt in order to “catch up in the (linear) line of evolution”. The New Culture activists employed the dichotomy between hieroglyph and alphabet, which implied those between backward and progress, tradition and modern, unscientific and scientific, and

Chinese and Western cultures. These series of related oppositions were taken for granted. A multi-dimensional literary reform was launched, as a linguistic premise for the creation of a New Culture. Indeed, the project of language reform has been labeled as the “modernization of Chinese” ever since.¹ This involves a certain version of Chinese linguistic modernity linked to the notion of New Writing as *Qi* of evolution, i.e. the technology of Chinese linguistic modernity as a project of artificial creative evolution, as I discussed in the previous chapter. The fervent proposal of replacing Chinese with Esperanto or other European languages eventually faded out. But the theme of creating a system of alphabet for Chinese, or rather to replace written Chinese, has been carried on until now. More importantly, the ideology that alphabetic writing is more scientific and superior than Chinese script still prevails and dominates the way people think of their cultural position in the world.

The attempt to create a Chinese alphabet went back to the late Qing period. The western missionaries had used Roman letters as notation of pronunciation to translate the Bible into the variety of Chinese local dialects since the late Ming dynasty. These systems of pronunciation notation were called the “Dialectal Romanization” 方言羅馬字 *Fang Yan Luo Ma Zi*. In the late Qing period, there was a constant effort among Chinese intellectuals to create indigenous systems of pronunciation notation. Following the establishment of the Republic of China in 1911, the “Standard Pronunciation Council” 讀音統一會 was founded later in that year, chaired by Wu Jieng-Heng (Wu Zhi-Hui) (1864-1953), dedicated to the development of a system of “national

¹ See Zhou, Youguang. 1986. “Modernization of the Chinese Language” in *International Journal of Social Language*. 59(1986), pp 7-23.

pronunciation” 國音 *Guo Yin*, an artificial blend of various dialects, although it eventually become Beijing-ized. The first officially recognized system of pronunciation notation, “Pronunciation Letters” 注音字母 *Zhu Yin Zi Mu*, was proposed in the 1913 council, and became the official system for elementary education nationwide since 1918.

“Pronunciation Letters” were created by Chinese classic scholar Zhang Bing-Lin (Zhang Tai-Yan)(1868-1936) from the ancient seal script characters. These were in 1930 renamed the “Pronunciation Symbols” 注音符號 *Zhu Yin Fu Hao*, because they are not “*real* alphabetic letters,” but *symbols* for pronunciation notation.² In light of the forceful critique of Chinese script and non-alphabetic writing, it is not surprising that the promotion of the “Pronunciation Symbols” could not satisfy the search for Chinese alphabet. For instance, Zhu Wo-Nong, who argued against Esperanto (because of its *artificiality*)³ but for Romanization, suggested that the use of “Pronunciation Letters” was a waste of time and even worse, would only aggravate the vicious nature of written Chinese.⁴ In response to this voice against “Pronunciation Letters (or Symbols),” its then official promoter Wu Jieng-Heng emphasized in a 1918 essay, that alphabetic

² The “Pronunciation Symbols” 注音符號 was officially translated as “Mandarin phonetic symbols.” The system is consisted of 39 symbols (later 40) plus four tone marks and a voicing symbol. See *The Republic of China Yearbook 1996*. Taipei: Government Information Office, ROC. P, 33.

³ See Zhu, You-Jien (Zhu, Wo-nong). 朱有昀 (朱我農). 1918. “Correspondence: Against Esperanto” in *New Youth* 5(4). Pp, 416-422. <通信:反對世界語>, 《新青年》第五卷第四號。See the discussion of “artificial evolution” in the chapter 2.

⁴ See Zhu, You-Jien (Zhu, Wo-Nong). 朱有昀 (朱我農). 1918. “Correspondence: Against the Pronunciation Letters” in *New Youth* 5(4). Pp, 413-416. <通信:反對注

writing [拼音文字 *Pin-Yin-Wen-Zi*] is not just a system of alphabet [拼音 *Pin-Yin*]. The former is a writing system, and the latter only a tool for pronunciation. Wu promoted “Pronunciation Symbols” as a tool for elimination of illiteracy, with the realization that it was extremely difficult if not impossible to abolish written Chinese so far.⁵ In 1922, Li Jin-Xi proposed that “we should abolish the Chinese characters, and adopt a new alphabetic script.” [廢除漢字，採用新拼音方案]. As the result of this voice for a “new alphabetic script,” the system of “National Romanization” 國語羅馬字 *Guo Yu Luo Ma Zi*, was released in 1928 as the “Second Mode of National Pronunciation Letters” 國音字母第二式 *Guo Yin Zi Mu Di Er Shi*. However, it did not get into the educational system, but was only used in dictionaries and for translation, and certainly by no mean functioned as a “new alphabetic *script*.” Nevertheless, this path of Romanization was later followed by the movement of Latinization 拉丁化 since the 1930’s, and finally led to the announcement of the 漢語拼音 *Han Yu Pin Yin* system in 1958, usually called *Pin Yin*, which was used for educational purposes in the People’s Republic of China established in 1949.⁶ Meanwhile, the Republic of China

意字母>，《新青年》第五卷第四號。

⁵ Wu, Jieng-Heng. 吳敬恆. 1918. “How Do We Improve Chinese Language” in *New Youth* 5(5). Pp, 483-508. <補救中國文字之方法若何>，《新青年》第五卷第五號。

This distinction also points to the difference between the “alphabetic” and “phonetic”, as I will further discuss in the next section on the nature of Chinese script.

⁶ See Xu, Xiao-Nong. 許笑儂 “The Origin of Pronunciation Symbols and Pin-Yin”. <注音符號及漢語拼音的由來>。
<http://www.pcmx.net/ncacsl/publish/mag4/mag4-18.txt>.

government which fled to Taiwan in 1949, continued to use the “Pronunciation Symbols” till the present time, emphasizing the government’s loyalty to the “Chinese heritage” as opposed to the Chinese Communists’ reckless destruction of Chinese cultural tradition.⁷ For example, recently, there has been a heated debate about the adopting the *Han Yu Pin Yin* system (which has been used in Mainland China since 1958 and become the international standard Pin Yin system since 1982) or the “indigenous” 通用拼音 *Tong Yong Pin Yin* created by Taiwanese scholars. The political issues between China and Taiwan have complicated the decision-making. The final decision has not been made after a long discussion of several years. Nevertheless, the replacement of the “Pronunciation Symbols”, which remains “too Chinese” in nature, with Latinized *Pin Yin* system has become more or less consensual. And the key word in the whole debate had been 與世界接軌 *Yu Shi Jie Jie Gui*, meaning “connect to the world” or “join track to the world” --- continuing the century-long theme of *worlding the modern China*, or 世界化 *Shi Jie Hua*, world-ization of China (and Taiwan). In either Mainland or Taiwan, the original search for a Chinese “alphabetic script” has never been successfully achieved.

A key question in the century-long literary reform has been whether Chinese script *should be* and *can be replaced* by an alphabetic system, whether it is Romanization or *Pin Yin* system. Now only very few will insist that Chinese script *should be* abolished. Due to the radical cultural disruption it would entail and the recent conscious critique of

⁷ See Wang, Xue-Wen. 汪學文. 1966. *China's Script reform and the Future of Chinese Characters*. Taipei: Institute of International Relations. 《中共文字改革與漢字前途》，台北：國際關係研究所叢書。

cultural imperialism, most people have recognized that this replacement would be impracticable or inappropriate. However, it should be borne in mind that, in the context of the early twentieth century, the original intention of “National Romanization” was not just the standardization of pronunciation for a variety of Chinese dialects, but the replacement of Chinese script as a whole.

Now I want to discuss a debate exemplifies the effect of the assumption that alphabetic writing is more “scientific.” That is the debate regarding Chinese script and Esperanto between Zhang Bing-Lin (who later invented “Pronunciation Symbols”) and Wu Jieng-Heng (who later became the chairman of “Standard Pronunciation Council”, and the main promoter of “Pronunciation Symbols” as the educational tool for increasing the rate of literacy) back in 1908.⁸ The first thing to note was that they both agreed that Chinese script was a *pictograph* or hieroglyph, the argument I will challenge in this chapter. For Zhang, Chinese script as *pictograph* pointed to Chinese cultural specificities *irreducible* to any system of alphabetic (or rather syllabic) writing. He particularly pointed to the *untranslatability* of 道 *Dao* as the example par excellence of cultural untranslatability.⁹ On the other hand, Wu, then the main advocator of Esperanto,

⁸ The argument for Esperanto of Qian Xuan-Tong and Chen Du-Xiu in the *New Youth* a decade later, as discussed in the last section of the chapter 2, basically followed Wu’s footsteps. For the Zhang-Wu debate in 1908, please see Zhan, Wei. 詹瑋. 1992. *Wu Zhi-Hui and National Movement*. Taipei: Literature, History and Philosophy Press. 《吳秩暉與國語運動》。台北：文史哲出版社。Pp, 48-55.

⁹ The notion of (un)translatability will be further discussed in chapter 4 (focusing on the problematic thesis of linguistic incommensurability), and in chapter 6 (focusing on the practices of cultural translation). Here it suffices to say that in that particular context, the *dichotomy between Culture and Science* appeared to capture the critique

employing the notion of science and evolution, argued for an *artificial* project of adopting a new language. For Wu, language was a practical matter, a *Qi* (technology) of evolution, a framework of thought. (See my discussion in the second chapter)¹⁰ Therefore, he attributed the current *untranslatability* and ambiguity of *Dao* to the lack of *scientific* and *precise* analysis of the term, instead of any intrinsic linguistic specificity and cultural irreducibility. As such, the debate about pictographic versus alphabetic writings was reconfigured into the dichotomy between *Culture versus Science*. The notion of “science” here was understood as a value-neutral system of knowledge that was supposed to be able to move beyond *any* historical specificities and move across cultural boundaries. Habermas’ definition of scientism as science’s faith in itself is pertinent here: “‘Scientism’ means science’s belief in itself: that is the conviction that we can no longer understand science as *one* form of knowledge, but rather must identify knowledge with science.”¹¹ In the West, this notion of science has come under criticism and ideological analysis, in that the notion of science is seen as basically an ideology. In the Chinese context, however, this faith in science was accompanied by a reinterpretation of the western positivist notion of scientism within a framework of

of Chinese written language. That is to say, Chinese writing was often reduced to the problem of (backward) Culture and therefore was seen as a historical relic of Chinese feudalism and primitivism, while European alphabetic writing was elevated to the status of (progressive) Science, which was seen as universally valid. There was therefore a tension between relativism and universalism in the project of Chinese linguistic modernity.

¹⁰ Wu Jieng-Heng later held the similar pragmatist notion about “Pronunciation Symbols.”

¹¹ As cited in Frisby, David. 1977. “Introduction to the English Translation” in Adorno, Theodor W. etc. 1977. *The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology*. Trans. By Glyn Adey and David Frisby. London: Heinemann Educational Books. P, xiii.

traditional Chinese cosmology and epistemology, as Wang Hui eloquently illustrated in his analysis of “Mr. Science” in China.¹² What interests me is the fact that Wu Jieng-Heng later made a concession in the matter of Chinese script, and even became the official promoter of “Pronunciation Symbols” invented by his opponent Zhang Bing-Lin, modifying the Chinese ancient characters. Perhaps this fact suggests that it was always difficult to maintain the antithesis between Culture and Science when it came to *the actual “scientific” analysis of culture, and the actual “cultural” policy of a “scientific” project*. The following discussion of the nature of Chinese characters shall further illustrate this point.

In the century long literary reform, and reflection on the nature and future of Chinese script, the value of *scientificity* has been assumed in all the different contexts, and always as the premise of achieving *modernity*. Wu Jieng-Heng and Qian Xuan-Tong resorted to the notion of science when they argued for the abolition of Chinese script eighty years ago. Likewise, the contemporary Chinese scholars also resorted to the notion of “science” when they argued against the debasement of Chinese script of the previous generations. The generational differences lie in their respective definitions of “scientificity,” and their different interpretations of Chinese script.

In a 1990 seminar on Chinese script and Chinese language, Chinese scholars discussed the advantages and efficiency of Chinese script *over* the Western alphabetic writing. The advantages they pointed out included the conciseness of the text, the inner logic, and the un-linearity of Chinese characters (i.e., the harmonious combination of

¹² See Wang, Hui. 1997. “The Fate of ‘Mr. Science’ in China: The Concept of Science and Its Application in Modern Chinese Thought” in *Formations of Colonial*

visual and audible parts of script).¹³ At the center of this revaluation of Chinese script was the reconfiguration, if not dissolution, of the dichotomy between pictographic and alphabetic writings. While the New Culture Movement generation usually defined, or rather assumed, Chinese script as a system of “pictography,” the later generations put emphasis on the fact that the majority of Chinese characters belong to the category of 形聲字 *Xing Sheng Zi*, a combinatory of figurative and phonetic parts, rather than simple pictograms. The principle of combining the visual and the phonetic parts has been the main method of creating new characters since 3500 years ago. As such, some scholars of Chinese script have suggested that, the written Chinese can be understood as *a writing system of phonetic notation*, 注音文字 as different from the Indo-European system of phonetic spelling 拼音文字.¹⁴ This change of emphasis is more than generational. It is about the ways of coping with the demand of situating China in a world where westernization and globalization have often been intertwined and sometimes seen as interchangeable.

In the following sections I will discuss the significance and consequence of this revaluation of Chinese script. Then I will further reassess New Cultural activists’

Modernity in East Asia ed. by Tanie Barlow. Duke University Press. Pp. 21-79.

¹³ See Xiao-Yuan Institute of Language and Cultural Technology (ed.) 曉園語文與文化科技研究所編. *Collection from Chinese Script and Chinese Language Seminar*. 2 Vols. Ji-Lin: Ji-Lin Education Publisher. 1991. 《漢字漢語學術研討論論文集》，上下卷。吉林：吉林教育社出版。

¹⁴ See Tang, Lan. 唐蘭. 1949. *The Study of Chinese Characters*. (*The Study of Chinese Wen and Zi*). 《中國文字學》，文光圖書公司印行。P. 3.

critique of the Chinese writing system, as well as its European counterpart, as Derrida has depicted in Hegel's response to Leibniz's "Chinese prejudice." Both Hegel and Leibniz believe that Chinese script is a *non*-historical writing. While Leibniz suggests that with some modification Chinese can serve as a model of "universal script."¹⁵ For Hegel, the same *non*-historical nature proves that Chinese script represents no *real* relations to History and Reason, unlike alphabetic writing.¹⁶ The relevance of Hegel's semiology for my purpose here lies in the fact that he was one of the major European philosophers who first seriously took the issue of "Oriental thinking," and that his quasi-*evolutionary* view of human thinking unintentionally, but not accidentally, resonates in the discursive field of the Chinese postcolonial situation in the turn of the twentieth century.

2. The Dual Structure of Figurative-Phonetic Characters: Rethinking the Dichotomy between Phonetic and Pictographic Writings

Against the then prevailing view of Chinese script as pictographic writing, Liang Qi-Chao, mentor of the New Culture generation, argued in 1922 that

Nothing is more wrong than the common view that Chinese script is a pictographic system, as opposing to the Indo-European phonetic

¹⁵ See Derrida, Jacques. 1974. *Of Grammatology*. Translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. The John Hopkins University Press. Pp, 76, 78-79.

¹⁶ While Derrida's discussion of what he calls the "Chinese prejudice" is located in his broader critique of the western metaphysics of presence, my discussion will be informed by the attempt to situate the century-long Chinese script reform in a broader postcolonial regime of power/knowledge, including the globalization of the notion of *sciencificity*.

system. If script [文字 *Wen-Zi*] was not phonetic, there would be no possibility of “multiplicity” [孳乳浸多 *Zi Ru Jin Duo*], and there would be no script at all.

流俗之論，每當中國文字屬於衍形系統，而與印歐衍聲之系統劃然殊途，此實謬見也。倘文字而不衍聲，則所謂「孳乳浸多」者未由成立，而文字之用，或幾乎息矣。¹⁷

Here Liang pointed out the fact that Chinese script was not simply a pictographic system, a fact that was otherwise quite obvious, but was constantly overlooked within the dominant ideological binary framework of alphabetic and pictographic writings. This framework equates alphabetic writing with *the* “phonetic writing” and labeled the other writing systems “non-phonetic.” The opposition between phonetic and non-phonetic writings is based on the European model of alphabetic writing, and as Derrida points out, has served as one of the linguistic assumptions underlying the western metaphysics of presence,¹⁸ as exemplified by Hegel’s privileging of alphabetic writing over “hieroglyphic written language”, which Hegel believed “would require a philosophy as stationary as is the civilization of the Chinese.”¹⁹ A closer look at Chinese

¹⁷ See Liang, Qi-Chao. 梁啟超. 1960 [1922] “An Investigation of Chinese Script from Pronunciation” in *Liang Qi-Chao Collection*. Vol. 13. Taiwan Chung-Hua Press. <從發音上研究中國文字之源>，《飲冰室文集》第十三卷。台灣中華書局印行。

¹⁸ Derrida, Jacques. 1974. *Of Grammatology*. Translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. The John Hopkins University Press. Indeed, Derrida’s project of grammatology is based on a radical critique of phonologism, which is another name for logocentrism, in western linguistics.

¹⁹ See Hegel, Georg Wilhelm. 1845 [1817]. *The Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences. Part Three: Philosophy of Mind*. Translated by William Wallace.

writing, however, would suggest that the opposition between phonetic and non-phonetic writings is inappropriate to understand the formation of Chinese characters and writing in particular, and misleading to understand the operation of writing in general.

Liang's argument was well based on the traditional scholarship of Chinese characters. The term 文字 *Wen-Zi* (script) points to the specific way of Chinese treatment of the written language. In ancient China, the traditional study of writing and script has been called 小學 *Xiao Xue*, meaning the "Small Learning," as opposed to the "Big Learning" of politics and morality. In the late Qing period, it was renamed 文字學 *Wen-Zi Xue*, the study of *Wen* and *Zi*. According to the famous script scholar Xu Shen (30-124), the author of the most quoted classic on Chinese characters, 說文解字 *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* (100), *Wen* is the pictographic representations of things, and *Zi* is the combinatory multiplicity of characters. [文者，物象之本；字者，言孳乳而寢多也。]²⁰ And this combinatory multiplicity often consist in the combination of two or more morphemes, usually with one of those working as a *phonetic signifier* that indicates the pronunciation of the character, and the other as a *significant signifier* that point to the meaning of the character. This kind of character is called 形聲字 *Xing Sheng Zi*, combinatory of *Xing* (the figurative part) and *Sheng* (the phonetic part), and the majority of Chinese characters belong to this category. There is a consensus that the pictography 象形 *Xiang Xing* "imitating the form", along with the ideogram 指事 *Zhi*

<http://www.ets.uidaho.edu/mickelsen/ToC/Hegel%20-%20Philosophy%20of%20Mind.htm>. Sec. 459.

²⁰ See Xiang Xi. 向夏. 1993. *Notes on Shuo Wen Jie Zi*. Taipei: Shu Lin Press. 《說文解字敘講疏》，書林出版有限公司。P, 29.

Shi “pointing at the thing”, was the first category of characters to appear in Chinese history, but it must not be mistakenly concluded that “pictography” ended the development of Chinese script. According to Xu Shen, there are six principles of forming the Chinese characters, generally called 六書 *Liu Shu*, the Six Scripts. Besides the aforementioned three categories, there are composite ideograms 會意 *Huei Yi*, “understanding the meaning”, combining two or more ideogram, 轉注 *Zhuan Zhu*, “mutually defining”, which is concerned with the use of synonymous characters, and 假借 *Chia-chieh*, or “borrowing”, which is concerned with the loan of homophones.²¹ Xu’s theory of the Six Scripts, despite its classical status, has been under many criticisms and revisions. Nevertheless, the theory of the Six Scripts remains the doctrine, and the competing theories focus on the interpretation and order of the six principles of characters-making. It is to be noted that Xu’s analysis of Chinese characters was based on the Small Seal Script (in terms of style) used in the Qin dynasty (BC 247 - 207). The difference between the Small Seal Script and the later Clerical Script is that the latter simplified the strokes and transformed the original rounded shape of Seal Script to the squared shape of characters now used.²² This change of calligraphic style blurred the *figurativeness* of the Seal Script. However, except for the constant changing of the calligraphic style, the principles of Chinese characters have been established and

²¹ Cf. Liu, James. J. Y. 1962. *The Art of Chinese Poetry*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press. P, 4-5.

²² New Cultural activist Qian Xuan-Tong called these square-shaped character “*Bu Xiang Xing Zi*” 不象形字, “not-pictographs”, meaning that Chinese characters have even lost the visual advantage of pictography, that it was even worse than the original pictograph.

remained relatively immutable since the First Emperor of the Qin dynasty achieved the standardization of Chinese script around BC 221. In 說文解字 *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* written in AD 100, Xu Shen analyzed 10516 characters, and more than 85% belong to the category of *Xing Sheng Zi*. As a matter of fact, the proportion of *Xing Sheng Zi* appeared to steadily increase since then. Among the common used characters, more than 90% belong to this category. It is certain that *Xing Sheng* is the *main* and *most productive* principle of character-making, as Liang Qi-Chao argued in the quote at the beginning of this section.²³ *Xing Sheng Zi* is sometimes translated as “the Phonetic Compounds,” but in the following discussion I will use the transliteration *Xing Sheng Zi*, or the literal translation “*Figurative-Phonetic Characters*,” to emphasize its specific dual structure.

Unlike New Culture activists around the 1920’s who characterized Chinese script as mainly an ahistorical “hieroglyph”, the recent generations of Chinese scholars put emphasis on the combinatory principle of “Figurative-Phonetic Characters.” In an interesting short conference essay “Culture of Figurative-Phonetic Characters” 形聲字文化, *Xing Sheng Zi Wen Hua*, contemporary Chinese linguistic scholar Zhang Yu-Jin connects the harmonious semiological principle of “Figurative-Phonetic Characters” to

²³ After the discovery of 甲骨文 *Jia Gu Wen* “shell and bone script” in 1900, which was the script craved on shells and bones used for divination in the Shang dynasty (around BC 1500), the study of Chinese character turned a new page. Several versions of “three script” theory have been proposed. The category of phonetic compounds remains the majority.

what he calls “deep Chinese mode of thinking.”²⁴ Like many, Zhang argues that *Xing Sheng Zi* is specific to Chinese written language.

Why are Chinese characters so long-lived? ... The characteristics of Han traditional historical thinking also contribute to the longevity of Chinese characters. Our traditional historical thinking is *in lack of transcendence, and is uncritical, and operates within the existing framework of thinking, and is unable of fundamental reform or creation*. ... Besides the linguistic, political, economic and cultural factors, there are some factors inherent to Chinese characters. That is, undoubtedly, there is a certain *scientificity* in the operation of Chinese characters.

Given the immutability of their basic principles, it is inevitable that Chinese characters would take the road of developing *Xing Sheng Zi*. ...

As other cultural phenomena of Han people, *Xing Sheng Zi* embodies *the adaptability and middle-way policy [調和持中]* characteristic of Chinese culture.[Italics added] ²⁵

A close examination of the above long quote shows, like the New Culture generations,

²⁴ See Zhang, Yu-Jin. 張玉金. 1991. “The Culture of Phonetic Compounds” 〈形聲字文化〉, *Xing Sheng Zi Wen Hua*. In Xiao-Yuan Institute of Language and Cultural Technology (ed.) 曉園語文與文化科技研究所編. 1991. *Collection from Chinese Script and Chinese Language Seminar*. Vol.1. Pp, 95-102. 《漢字漢語學術研討論論文集》, 上卷。吉林：吉林教育社出版。Ji-Lin: Ji-Lin Education Publisher.

²⁵ See *ibid.*, pp, 99-101.

Zhang approaches Chinese script as the embodiment of Chinese Culture and Mind – or what he calls “our traditional historical thinking.” Zhang argues that this traditional mode of thinking is immutable in principle – he loosely labels it as a “lack of transcendence” and “uncritical” and “operates within the existing framework of thinking, and is unable of fundamental reform or creation.” This negative diagnosis of Chinese mode of thinking resonates with the New Culture generation. However, contra New Culture generations, Zhang insists that a certain “scientificity” can be found in the operation of Chinese characters, meaning it is *logical* in its own way. He employs the term “the adaptability and middle-way policy” [調和持中 *Diao He Chi Zhong*] from *I Ching* to describe this cultural logic. According to his interpretation, the late Qing principle of “Chinese learning as substance and Western learning as function” (which I discuss in chapter 2) is exemplary of Chinese cultural logic. So is the harmonious semiological principle of “Figurative-Phonetic Characters.” As such, unlike the New Culture Generation, Zhang makes no critique of the late Qing functional adoption of western technology. Zhang adopts an attitude of “mere acceptance” toward Chinese cultural specificities. This attitude of “mere acceptance” is based on a certain positivist notion of “scientificity.”

Table 3.1 Contemporary scholar Zhang Yu-Jin’s interpretation of the harmonious semiological principle of “Figurative-Phonetic Characters”

Tao 道	Yin 陰	Yang 陽
Harmonious Hierarchy	Left 左	Right 右
Figurative-Phonetic Characters 形聲字	Xing(Figurative) 形	Sheng(phonetic) 聲

According to my observation, the contemporary generation's positivist notion of "scientificity", in contrast to the New Culture generation's version of positivism, carries a political tone of cultural relativism. This stance of cultural relativism insists that the replacement of "Chinese" character with "western" alphabetic writing would be "unscientific" because the existence of Chinese characters is a "scientific fact."²⁶ While New Culture generation's version of positivism suggested that there was only one kind of "good" (meaning "progressive" and "scientific") language, the contemporary generation's positivism intends to defend Chinese written language without devaluing the alphabetical writing. Moreover, scholars employ recent information science to elaborate the merits of Chinese characters. They point out that Chinese writing is actually more precise and economic in terms of information storage and delivery. They also resort to experiments on aphasia which suggests that children with aphasia who are unable to learn alphabetic writing and reading can nevertheless learn to recognize Chinese characters. The study shows that in order to write or read Chinese, one has to exercise those parts of brain dealing with visual information as well as those with vocal information.²⁷

²⁶ See Wu, Chang-Fu. 巫長福. 1991. "Chinese Characters is the Language of Human Wisdom" 〈漢字是人類的智慧文字〉, in *Collection from Chinese Script and Chinese Language Seminar*. Vol.1. Pp, 95-102. Pp. 112-122. P.113, p. 114.

²⁷ See Lee, You-Ren. 李友仁. 1991 "Chinese Language and Characters are the most Efficient Language and Writing" 〈漢語漢字是效率最高的語言文字〉, Wu, Zhi-Jian. 吳之劍. 1991. "Chinese Characters are an Efficient Tool for Thinking Training" 〈漢字是思維具訓練的有效工具〉, and Lu, Zuo-Xin. 呂作昕. 1991. "The Advantages of Chinese Characters: Information Reception and Brain Function" 〈從人體的信息接收和大腦功能特點看漢字的優越性〉. All in *Collection from Chinese Script and Chinese Language Seminar*. Vol.1. pp. 123-130, and pp. 131-135.

The aforementioned study of aphasia leads us back to the dual system of *Xing Sheng Zi* (Figurative-Phonetic Characters). Table 3.1 summarizes Zhang's interpretation of the harmonious semiological principle of "Figurative-Phonetic Characters." Zhang suggests that there is a hierarchical relationship between the figurative and the phonetic parts of *Xing Sheng Zi*. The phonetic part, which is usually put on the right, is said to be the superior, and the figurative the inferior. However, it is not necessarily the case. Indeed, the hierarchical interpretation may contradict the harmonious interpretation he proposes as the main argument. As a matter of fact, the structure of an actual *Xing Sheng Zi* is far more complicated than Zhang suggests. A figurative-phonetic character can be comprised of more than two simpler characters. A Chinese character is like a Chinese box; there is a character in a character which is in another bigger character, and so on. The figurative part is not necessary a simple pictogram, the category of 象形 *Xiang Xing* "imitating the form". It can be an ideogram, the category of 會意 *Huei Yi*, "understanding the meaning," which may combines more than two simply pictograms. In each case, the figurative indicates the meaning of the character. The phonetic part, however, sometimes also indicates *meaning*, as well as the sound of the character. Likewise, the phonetic part also can be comprised of more than one simpler character. For example, the character for "marry a woman" 娶 is comprised of two characters 女 "woman" and 取 "take" (which in turn is comprised of two simply characters 耳 "ear" and 又 "again"), together meaning "take the woman." It is pronounced *Qu* following the character 取 "take." As such, some figurative-phonetic characters can also be understood as a "understanding the meaning" character which is constituted by

certain *relation between different characters*. The difference between these two categories is that in figurative-phonetic characters there is a part-character used as a *phonetic signifier*, while in usual “understanding the meaning” characters both parts of the character are used merely as *significant signifiers* indicating certain relation.

The use of a part-character as a phonetic signifier is the main principle of multiplicity for Chinese written language. It can be used to indicate *different characters for similar or related meanings*, and form a group of related characters. Take “(a man) marry a woman” 娶 as example. The related character 嫁 “(a woman) marry a man” is comprised of 女 “woman” and 家 “home”, meaning “(a woman) marry into a home,” and pronounced *Jia* following 家 “home” (which in turn is a pictogram, originally showing there is “a pig (kept) under a roof”). The relationship between these characters 嫁 and 娶 reflects the relations between man and woman in traditional Chinese patriarchal society (as well as in most contemporary societies), where a woman marries “into” the man’s house, and the man “takes” the woman as a wife.

Other figurative-phonetic characters, however, did not have both parts of the character used as *significant signifiers*. For instance, there are different characters for “river” in Chinese: 河 *He* (or *Ke*) and 江 *Jiang* (or *Gong*). The left part is the root pictogram for water, and right part indicates the sound of the river, and therefore the sound of the character. As such, 河 and 江 indicate both the visual and audible expressions of a river. Here the character is almost like a *reflection* of the river. Likewise, 嫁 and 娶 indicate the relation of women and men in the institution of marriage. The characters are the reflection of the institution. The signs are the reflection

of objects, *in terms of vision, sound, and relation*. Does it mean that Chinese written language is too attached to the objects, and therefore is not able to do “abstract” thinking, as the New Culture activists would suggest? The following discussion will venture to answer this question.

As I pointed out in the previous chapters, the main argument that New Culture activists used to devaluate Chinese written language is based on the assumption that Chinese is a hieroglyphic system and not alphabetic, and therefore is unsuitable for modern, scientific, and progressive thinking. In the above discussion I establish the fact that the main principle of creating Chinese characters is combining figurative and phonetic signifiers, and that it is therefore wrong to describe Chinese writing a merely pictographic system, and that the dichotomy between pictographic and alphabetical writing is not appropriate to understand Chinese system. The Chinese writing system can not be reduced to pictography.

3. The Hegelian “Alphabetic Prejudice”

The western philosophy of language has assumed a unilinear evolutionary order from hieroglyphic to alphabetic writing. Most social linguistics believe that the first written language was imitative of nature, in terms of both sound and sight. The etymological analysis of Chinese characters for river, which remain unchanged for more than two thousand years, seems to prove this hypothesis of imitation. Alphabetic writing, as phonetic writing, which only consists in the signs of *human* voice, on the other hand, is said to have detached from the natural world and entered the human domain of

abstract rationality, and at the same retained the natural human voice. Indeed, it was based on this hierarchical opposition of *nature* and *human* – its being “dialectical” by no means changes the linear hierarchical relation – that eighteenth century German philosopher Hegel, as well as many early twentieth century Chinese New Culture activists, claimed that alphabetic writing was more progressive, intellectual and rational, and hieroglyphics was backward and “primitive.” The fundamental problem of this kind of assertion is – Is this assumption of a unilinear evolutionary order from hieroglyphic to alphabetic writing appropriate at all? Or it is better to approach them as two *divergent lines* of linguistic development, built on and constituting different modes of rationality? Let me add one qualification: when I say “different modes of rationality”, I only mean “different” and *never* “incommensurable.” I mean that there is always *a space of translation* between different modes of rationality. Irreducibility of cultural and linguistic differences should never be confounded with logical incommensurability.²⁸

Underlying this unilinear evolutionist argument is a *hierarchical* relation between *intuition and intellect*, and between *nature and human*. Among western philosophers, Hegel is one of those who most eagerly elevate alphabetic writing to the status of “more intelligent” writing, and at the same time devalue hieroglyphic system, including ancient Egyptian and Chinese writings, to the level of “dumb” writing. Indeed Hegel’s treatment of alphabetic and hieroglyphic writings prefigures the pattern of thought I would like to call the “*alphabetic prejudice*”, which has dominated modern Chinese imagination of a “better written language” since the early twentieth century.

²⁸ I will further discuss the problematic theme of incommensurability in chapter 4.

Hegel defines the “sign” as the immediate intuition, which needs to undergo a dialectical movement before it can become the “sign proper”. As Derrida points out, in Hegel’s semiology,

The sign is understood according to the structure and movement of the *Aufhebung*, by means of which .the spirit, elevating itself above the nature in which it was submerged, at once suppresses and retains nature, sublimating nature into itself, accomplishing itself as internal freedom, and thereby presenting itself to itself, *as such*.²⁹ [italics original]

For Derrida, whose real target is the western metaphysics of presence, Hegel’s philosophy of the sign is about the dialectic of self-presence, which in the last analysis is the auto-affection of speech, the operation of “hearing oneself speak”. In this dialectic of presence, the sign is working as the medium, a site of contradiction, “being *both* interior and exterior, spontaneous and receptive, intelligible and sensible, the same and the other, etc.”³⁰ As such, the movement of difference is reduced to a “dialectic.” The Hegelian semiological structure of the *Aufhebung*, however, as I will point out in the following discussion, always tends to reduce the *irreducible* movement of “hieroglyphics” to a *non*-dialectical formalism, which to Hegel can only mean formalism, stagnation, and death. It is “irreducible” because I want to emphasize that the development of “hieroglyphics” as writing systems other than European alphabetic

²⁹ Derrida, Jacques. 1982. “The Pit and the Pyramid: Introduction to Hegel’s Semiology” in *Margins of Philosophy*. Tr. by Alan Bass. The University of Chicago Press. p. 76.

³⁰ Derrida, Jacques. 1982. P. 79.

model is *not* to be reduced to a “stagnant” stage of the Hegelian dialectic of “spirit.”

Derrida has pointed out many contradictions in Hegel’s treatment of Chinese writing, especially its ethnocentrism and phonologism, which proves the western logocentrism is in every way *politically* problematic. While Derrida’s discussion of Hegel’s semiology is located in his broader project of critiquing the western metaphysics of presence – which in itself already shows a profound political affinity with the postcolonial critique of western culture – I intend to rethink Hegel’s treatment of hieroglyphics in a more direct context of the (post-)colonial ethos of evolutionism and Occidentalism.³¹

According to the Hegel dialectic, the naïve intuition of a sign has to be cancelled, negated, and sublimated, in order to be transformed from the mere reflection of objects into the sign proper. Such is the function of the *negativity* of intelligence.³² While the immediate spatial intuition produces signs imitative of nature, human vocal notes receive further articulation in the temporality of inner thought and this gives intuitions a “second and higher existence.” For Hegel, what a hieroglyphics like Egyptian and Chinese lacks, is precisely this function of *dialectical* negativity. Hieroglyphics therefore is stuck with the primitive ideas based on immediate spatial intuitions. It is a

³¹ I will further discuss in chapter 7 Derrida’s critique of western logocentrism, in relation to the postcolonial version of phnocentrism as I find in Chinese linguistic modernity.

³² The following discussion is based on Hegel, Georg Wilhelm. 1845 [1817]. *The Philosophy of Mind: Part Three of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*. Translated by William Wallace. Section. 459.
<http://www.ets.uidaho.edu/mickelsen/ToC/Hegel%20-%20Philosophy%20of%20Mind.htm>.

“symbolism referring to external objects.” Even when it detaches from the original visual intuitions through later modification or simplification of strokes, without the mediation of *human voice*, hieroglyphics would only lapse into the dead trap of arithmetic formalism, or as Chinese New Cultural activist Qian Xuan-Tong said, become “*Bu Xiang Xing Zi*” 不象形字, “not-pictographs”, which was worse than the original pictograph because it even lost the advantage of showing the spatial embodiment of nature and intuition. Compared to Egyptian symbolism, the Chinese writing system, although a progress in “abstraction understanding”, is in an awkward position where naturalism and formalism are unhappily married, *unable* to move on to the real dialectical synthesis of nature and human. This “progress” therefore was conceived as a *failed* dialectic, which cut short the movement of “spirit.”

In contrast to hieroglyphics’ undialectical spatiality, alphabetic writing involves a dialectical movement from the spatial to temporal order, before it can return to a *temporalized spatial order of writing*. The temporality of inner thought is the movement of Hegelian spirit. This movement of spirit, however, is already in need of linguistic analysis.

In particular, hieroglyphics uses spatial figures to designate *ideas*; alphabetical writing, on the other hand, uses them to designate *vocal notes* which are already signs. Alphabetical writing thus consists of *signs of signs* - the words or concrete signs of vocal language being analysed into their simple elements, which severally receive designation. - Leibniz's *practical* mind misled him to exaggerate the advantages which a *complete written language*, formed on the

hieroglyphic method (and hieroglyphics are used even where there is alphabetic writing, as in our signs for the numbers, the planets, the chemical elements, etc.), would have as a universal language for the intercourse of nations and especially of scholars. ³³ [italics added]

According to Hegel, writing in general, both hieroglyphics and alphabetical system, as external expression of thought, can only be comprised of “spatial figures.” [Note that this assertion is already a reduction, which devalue writing to the secondary level of an outer “expression” of something inward and overlooks the productivity of writing itself.] The crucial difference between hieroglyphics and alphabetic writing is that, in the latter, the written spatial expression of thought is working through the *temporal mediation of speech*, “human vocal notes which are already signs”. With this mediation, alphabetic writing is able to “return” from the externality of writing to the inwardness of thought, and keep in touch with its temporality. Therefore, the “sign proper” is at the same time exterior and interior. In alphabetic writing, the object of semiological analysis is the *human* vocal notes, as opposing to the “ideas of *natural* object” in hieroglyphics. As such, alphabetic writing and its corresponding vocal language are said to be co-evolving, while hieroglyphic writing becomes a written language *besides* its vocal languages. This kind of “written language”, a relatively independent system *outside* the evolution of spoken languages, is for Hegel a stubborn *monstrosity* which refuses to join the grand dialectic of human spirit. Leibniz’s praise of Chinese writing as the blueprint for a universal script is therefore not only philosophically wrong, but

³³ Hegel, Georg Wilhelm. 1845 [1817]. *The Philosophy of Mind: Part Three of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*. Translated by William Wallace. Section.

indeed *politically* dangerous. For Hegel, Chinese script belongs to the same domain of monstrosity as the Leibnizean mathematic model, formalism, exteriority, the machine, and death. This monstrosity is indeed a strange form of *artificiality* which Hegel could not find a way to incorporate into his grand dialectical model. Interestingly enough, when Chinese New Cultural activist Qian Xuan-Tong argued for the replacement of Chinese script by Esperanto, he crossed into the Leibnizean passion for an *artificial* script, although he also was deeply engaged in the Hegelian alphabetic prejudice. Qian compared (written) linguistic signs to the “signs of measurement, chronology and currency. The more signs are unitary, the less trouble we have to go through.”³⁴ Qian viewed Esperanto (which of course was artificial in the sense that it was invented by *one* man) and indeed the general European model as a kind of artificial language, which could be used as a technology of Chinese artificial evolution. Likewise, Leibniz used Chinese script as another artificial model (besides the mathematical model) for a future universal script. For Qian, the European model had *no* history, just like for Leibniz, as well as for Hegel, Chinese script was a *non*-historical model. As matter of fact, for Hegel, China and other “Orientals” had not even entered the World History. Perhaps it is partly through a certain de-historicized imagination of the *otherness* of a foreign language that one can start to appreciate the “artificiality” of language itself.

For Hegel, however, the artificiality of Chinese script is a monstrosity, that is its inability to evolve with speech, and therefore its inability to in turn guide the evolution

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³⁴ See Qian, Xuan-Tong. 錢玄同. 1918d. “Correspondence: on Esperanto” in *New Youth* 4(2). Pp, 173-177. <通信：論世界語>，*《新青年》* 第四卷第二號。P, 177.

of its spoken language.

The progress of the vocal language depends most closely on the habit of alphabetical writing; by means of which only does vocal language acquire the *precision* and *purity* of its articulation. The *imperfection* of the Chinese vocal language is notorious: numbers of its words possess several utterly different meanings, as many as ten and twenty, so that, in speaking, the distinction is made perceptible merely by *accent* and *intensity*, by *speaking low and soft or crying out*. The European, learning to speak Chinese, falls into the most ridiculous blunders before he has mastered these absurd refinements of accentuation.³⁵

[italics added]

Here the otherness of Chinese script is monstrous for “the European learning to speak Chinese.” The polysemia of Chinese vocal language is also monstrous. Note Hegel’s *exotic* description of the Chinese way to distinguish between different meanings of the same words, “speaking low and soft or crying out.” Compare to the *scientific* operation of the alphabetic system, the “precision and purity of its articulation.” Strangely enough, it never occurred to a major philosopher like Hegel that the meaning of a polysemic word was mainly dependent on the context of a sentence or a statement rather than by “speaking low and soft or crying out.” Obviously here Hegel confuses polysemic words with synonyms. But likewise, the best way to distinguish between synonyms would be the context.

³⁵ Hegel, Georg Wilhelm. 1845 [1817]. *The Philosophy of Mind: Part Three of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*. Translated by William Wallace. Section.

Hegel's negative exotic imagination of hieroglyphics begets the most profound fear of *signifying anarchism*. Hegel insists the "simple element" of alphabetic writing, as well as "language" per se is the "name". The name is the "simple sign for the exact idea, i.e. the simple plain idea." On the other hand, hieroglyphic writing, according to Hegel's reduction, is merely based on the analysis of ideas, that is, without the mediation of vocal signs.

This feature of hieroglyphic – the analytical designation of ideas – which misled Leibniz to regard it as preferable to alphabetic writing is rather in antagonism with the fundamental desideratum of language – name. ... [I]n hieroglyphics the relations of concrete mental ideas to one another must necessarily be tangled and perplexed, and the analysis of these (and the proximate results of such analysis must again be analysed) *appears to be possible in the most various and divergent ways*. Every divergence in analysis would give rise to another formation of written names. ... A hieroglyphic written language would require a philosophy as stationary as is the civilization of the Chinese.³⁶ [italics added]

Here Hegel's imagination of the otherness appears to completely de-historicize the *context* of linguistic ideas and names. "The analysis of these [ideas] appears to be possible in the most various and divergent ways." According to Hegel's imagination,

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³⁶ Hegel, Georg Wilhelm. 1845 [1817]. *The Philosophy of Mind: Part Three of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*. Translated by William Wallace. Section. 459.

while the analysis of vocal notes can be “precise” and “pure”, the analysis of pictograms, based on immediate intuitions and without the mediation of speech, creates a monstrous space of *ambiguity*. Hegel is afraid that the *ambiguity* of hieroglyphic ideas will lead to a proliferation of names, and create chaos of signification or meaning. He therefore assumes that, in order for a system of hieroglyphics to stay alive, meaning being used, and unitary, as against the proliferation of names, it would require a “philosophy as stationary as is the civilization of the Chinese.” Hegel seems to suggest that the analysis of ideas can be endless without any restriction from the social and political contexts, which make such analysis possible, necessary, urgent, or superfluous. For example, it was the situation of Chinese postcoloniality in the early twentieth century that made the linguistic and cultural analysis of certain ideas imperative, and thereby created a translational space of ambiguity.³⁷

Tabel 3.2 The Hegelian comparison of hieroglyphics and alphabetic writing

hieroglyphics	alphabetic writing
visual	vocal
space	time
idea	name
nature	spirit
exteriority	interiority
immediate intuition	mediation [through the function of negativity of intelligence]
a progress in formal understanding, but a failed dialectic, which ended in dead formalism	dialectic of spirit

³⁷ I will further discuss the theme of a “translational space” in chapter 6.

Moreover, Hegel overlooks the fact that *arbitrariness* of signs is not just an expression of the freedom of spirit, but must be more or less based on historical contingency. What causes a writing system to collapse is not the proliferation of names, but devastating military encounters and decline of empires. A philosophy can never assure the liveliness of a written language. It is a political, rather than philosophical issue. As a pertinent example, the written language reform of People's Republic of China in the past five decades has systematically simplified Chinese characters and created a cultural gap preventing the younger generations from being able to read the ancient texts written in traditional characters. The fate of the Chinese writing system demonstrates that the *arbitrariness* of signs can be overly political.

As I point out in the above discussion, Hegel believes that it is only through the *mediation of speech* that a writing system can achieve precision and be able to catch up with the dialectic movement of "spirit." He insists that hieroglyphics is a "deaf reading" and a "dumb writing." For him, hieroglyphics remains in the unintelligent domain of nature, without the dialectical movement of returning to the interiority of human thought, even when it makes a progress in "formal understanding" as Chinese did. Alphabetic writing being the Hegelian dialectical full circle, is able to achieve a temporalized spatiality, a temporalized space of writing. Moreover, the temporality of speech/thought, or what Hegel calls "logical instinct", is said to lay out the formation of grammar. For Hegel, the *non-historical* nature of Chinese writing proves itself to be "*primitive, in lack of genuine subjectivity, and a great hindrance to the development of*

the science".³⁸ A language like Chinese, "has no way of indicating grammatical case. Rather it simply leaves its words standing one next to the other".³⁹ Alphabetic and phonetic writing on the other hand is historic, and rational, that is, alive and evolving with the inner voice of speech.

The New Culture activists in the early twentieth century China shared Hegel's eurocentric "alphabetic prejudice." The Chinese phonologist, and the most zealous activist of the movement, Qian Xuan-Tong insists that,

Chinese language, with its meanings so obscure and grammar so imprecise, can only represent *ancient primitive* thought, and is absolutely incapable of representing the civilization of the new world since Larmark and Darwin.⁴⁰ (Italics added)

Chinese script is *hieroglyph with insufficient adjectives and prepositions, without inflection in verbs, difficult to recognize and write, and never clear in meaning*. It is fundamentally inferior.⁴¹ (Italic added)

³⁸ Hegel, Georg Wilhelm. 1956 [1830-31]. *The Philosophy of History*. Tr. J. Sibree. New York: Dover Publication, INC. pp, 132-134.

³⁹ Hegel quoted in Saussy, Huan. 1993. *The Problem of A Chinese Aesthetic*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. P, 165. For Hegel's semiology, see also Derrida, J. 1982. "Tympan" in *Margins of Philosophy*. Tr. by Alan Bass. The University of Chicago Press. Esp., 102-103.

⁴⁰ See Qian, Xuan-Tong. 錢玄同. 1918a. "Correspondence: China's language Problem Nowadays" in *New Youth* 4(4). Pp, 350-356. <通信:中國今後之文字問題>, 《新青年》第四卷第四號。P. 352.

⁴¹ See Qian, Xuan-Tong. 錢玄同. 1918c. "Letters: on Esperanto" in *New Youth* 5(5). Pp, 524-526; 542-543. <通信:論世界語>, 《新青年》第五卷第五號。P, 542.

It is not difficult to see the similarities between Qian's argument and Hegel's case against Chinese "hieroglyphics" and "stationary civilization." Chinese script's being a "hieroglyphics" seems to be enough proof for its inferiority. Like Hegel, who suggests that Chinese language by no means indicates a "grammatical case", the Chinese New Culture movement used a eurocentric concept of "grammar" to argue that Chinese writing was incomplete in grammatical rules.⁴²

This "alphabetic prejudice" continues to affect the way Chinese people think of languages, and their cultural position in the world. Its continual effect is manifest in both the effort to defend the cultural dignity of Chinese written system as well as the effort that continues to argue for a radical change of Chinese written language. Contemporary Chinese scholar Mao Yu-Yuan's controversial essay "The pitfalls and fallacies of Chinese Written Language" is the best example of the latter.⁴³ Mao Yu-Yuan goes so far to claim that the "secret of civilization" is in alphabetic language, rather than in science or philosophy, because alphabetic language creates God, and logic, and religion, and civilization. He associates the horizontal writing of alphabetic system with democracy, as opposing to the vertical writing of traditional Chinese system, which has been replaced by the horizontal writing since the New Culture generation

⁴² The question of grammar will be the topic of next chapter. Here it would suffice to say that it is wrong and eurocentric to say that Chinese written language "has no grammar", or "has no way of indicating grammatical case."

⁴³ See Mao, Yu-Yuan. 毛喻原. 2000. "The pitfalls and fallacies of Chinese Written Language" in *Shu-Wu Journal* 2000 (9). <論漢語的險境和詭謬>，原載《書屋》第九期。 <http://www.edu.cn/20011218/3014499.shtml>.

onward.⁴⁴ For Mao Yu-Yuan, the “pitfalls” of Chinese written Language consists in its “*visualism*”, “the unity of text and *nature*”, “the incapacity of *culture* to detach from *nature*”, “the tendency to self-closure.” And he enlists eight “fallacies”, including the ambiguity of meaning, and the monosyllabic, and the mere reflection of nature, and so on. Mao Yu-Yuan’s argument indicates continuity with that of the new Culture generation ninety years ago.

In a word, according to this viewpoint, which I has called the Hegelian “alphabetic prejudice”, Chinese “hieroglyphics,” without the Hegealian mediation of speech, is in lack of transcendence, sublimation, or the *Aufhebung*, which would has elevated Chinese culture from the domain of nature. As I pointed out, even a contemporary scholar like Zhang Yu-Jin, who sets as his goal the defense of the cultural dignity of Chinese script, feels the need to consent to the idea that Chinese culture lacks “transcendence” and therefore is “incapable of fundamental reform or creation.” This kind of diagnosis of Chinese culture as not detached from “nature” enough, just like the Hegelian debasement of non-alphabetic writing, is based on the binary oppositions of culture and nature, which privileges human over non-human, and assumes they are two separate, hierarchical domains, or that they are on different ontological planes. Indeed, it is only according on this ontological dualism, that the humanist notion of “transcendence” becomes a condition for human creativity.

The fundamental question therefore is the following: is the hierarchical binary opposition of culture and nature appropriate to understand Chinese writing system, or

⁴⁴ The official magazine of the New Culture Movement, *New Youth*, was still printed in vertical system. But there was a voice for change in the movement.

any writings at all? Is it appropriate to understand the notion of “culture” at all? Perhaps what we need is a new framework to think of culture and language, other than a dualistic opposition which validate human culture at expense of nature.

In the following section, I will suggest that a rethinking of the structure of Chinese pictography, which has taken a *different line of evolution* other than the Hegelian dialectic of alphabetic writing, should help to bring forth such new framework for rethinking the relationship between culture and nature.

4. Analytic of Chinese Pictography: Rethinking the Opposition between Culture and Nature

Figurative-phonetic characters, 形聲字 *Xing Sheng Zi*, made up 90% of Chinese characters. This fact alone defeats the common argument that Chinese script is a “non-phonetic” writing, as I point out in the second section. However, pictograms remain the basic elements of Chinese characters. The Chinese term for pictograms or “hieroglyphs” is 象形字 *Xiang Xing Zi*. *Zi* means character. *Xiang-Xing* means “picture,” but more. 象 *Xiang* and 形 *Xing* are two characters involved with two different spectra of meaning. The character 象 *Xiang* especially has rich cultural connotation in Chinese ancient texts. Indeed, it seems to me *Xiang* is a key word for Chinese notion of culture.

Etymologically speaking, the character 象 *Xiang* originally means the elephant. Actually, it is a pictogram of an elephant. Then it is also used to refer to “phenomenon.” This notion of phenomenon, however, should not be understood from the viewpoint of a

Kantian philosophy, or the hierarchical opposition between essence and phenomenon. It is rather closer to a Heideggerean “revealing.” In the Ancient classic *The Records of Rites* 禮記 *Li-ji*, it says

Become phenomenon in the heaven. Become formation in the earth.

在天成象 在地成形

天象 *Tian Xiang* “heaven phenomenon” in Chinese means astronomic configuration. In ancient China, particular astronomic configuration was often believed to be some kind of “signs” from the heaven, indicating the birth of a great man, or the fate of the country. In *Records of the Historian* 史記 *Shi-ji*, it says, “Divination until foresee the appearance.” [卜筮至預見表象 *Bu Shi Zhi Yu Jian Biao Xiang*]. Here again 表象 *Biao Xiang* the “appearance” coming out of divination, usually on tortoise shells, was seen as a sign from the heaven or gods. Divination is a mode of revealing the truth, or heaven’s message. In Lao Zi’s *Dao De Ching*, it says, “ Once grasp the great phenomenon, one can go everywhere in the world.” [執大象天下往 *Zhi Da Xiang Tian Xia Wang*] Here the term 大象 *Da Xiang* the “great phenomenon” refers to the principle of things, that can be said to equivalent to “essence” as western philosophy would have it. In Chinese, 大 *Da* “great” does not just mean big or great, it can also mean main or principal. Therefore, the difference between “appearance” or “phenomenon” and “essence” is not a difference of kind. It is not even a difference of degree. Rather it is a difference of conception. The relationship between “phenomenon” and “great phenomenon” (the principle) is that of implication and explication. Phenomenon is explicative of principle, and principle is implicative of phenomenon. I

would argue that, their relationship is homologous to that between 道 *Dao* and 器 *Qi*, as I suggested in the previous chapter, based on my discussion of Chinese ancient texts on the subject-matter.

Table 3.3 Recapitulation of my discussion of *Dao/Qi* distinction in chapter 2

<i>Dao/Qi</i> distinction	Qi 器	Dao 道
The differential velocities of the fluid movement of <i>Dao</i> (there is no absolute inside and outside)	The overt 顯	The latent 隱
<i>Qi</i> as the organ of <i>Dao</i> (nature and form are in the same body)	The outside 外在	The inside 內在
The immanence of <i>Dao</i> in the <i>Qi</i> (<i>Qi</i> brings forth <i>Dao</i> , just as <i>techné</i> brings forth and reveals Being)	“ <i>Dao</i> only exists in <i>Qi</i> ”[道在器中] / “Substance and function implicate each other.” [體用相函].	
There is a “ <i>virtual</i> space of evolution” between <i>Dao</i> and <i>Qi</i> , in which things are created and becoming.	This dynamic notion of evolution points to the <i>performativity</i> of <i>Qi</i> , and the corresponding notion of <i>Dao</i> as the field of composition in which <i>Qi</i> performs. The <i>performativity</i> of <i>Qi</i> makes it impossible to maintain the binary dichotomy between <i>Ti</i> and <i>Yong</i> .	

As matter of fact, in Lao Zi, the “great phenomenon” is understood to be the invisible phenomenon closest to *Dao*, or it is *Dao* itself. “The great phenomenon is without formation. *Dao* is hidden without the name” [大象無形 道隱無名 *Da Xiang Wu Xing Dao Yin Wu Ming*]. Unlike usual phenomena, or appearances, the “great phenomenon” is invisible. It is the principle of the phenomenon. Table 3.3 recapitulates my discussion of *Dao/Qi* distinction. In these four versions, none indicates a straight hierarchical relationship. Rather, they show that *Qi* and *Dao* are mutually implied, that *Dao* is immanent in *Qi* and *Qi* is mode of revealing *Dao*. The position of

“phenomenon” 象 *Xiang* in this schema is obviously somewhere in the *virtual* space between *Dao* and *Qi*. Simply put it, the phenomenon is the revealing of *Dao* through *Qi*, i.e. technology. For example, divination is a technology of revealing gods’ will. I emphasize that it is a virtual space of evolution, because there is no actual interval between *Dao* and *Qi*. And *Dao* as something revealed is not something “given.” *Dao* and *Qi* are co-evolving in the movement of bringing forth new things.

Now where do we put 形 *Xing* [formation of things] in this schema? There is a *seemly* hierarchical or topological order between 象 *Xiang* and 形 *Xing*. “Become phenomenon [象] in the heaven. Become formation [形] in the earth.” At least in ancient China, phenomenon from the heaven is of higher order than formation in the earth. But this order is ready to be reversed if seen from another perspective. In *The Book of Change* 易經 *I Ching*, it says, “the metaphysical is *Dao*, the physical is *Qi* [形而上爲道，形而下爲器]. This conventional translation, however, leaves out other richer possibility. As I discussed in chapter 2, the “metaphysical” 形而上 *xing er shang* literally means “above the form” or “beyond the form”. and the “physical” 形而下 *xing er xia* means “below the form.” I thus provide the following two versions of alternative translation.

1. We must say that what is beyond formation is *Dao*, and what is under formation is *Qi*.
2. We must say that: *Dao* forms and (moves) beyond, *Qi* forms and (moves) below.

In the first case, *Dao* and *Qi* can be interpreted as *before* and *after* formation within a linear temporality. In the second case, they can be said to be *different configurations* of formation. Either way, there is a third term “formation” in between *Dao* and *Qi*, which generally refers to the form or formation of things. As such, there seems a quasi-temporal sequence of *Dao* [principle], *Xing* [formation], *Qi* [technology], and *Xiang* [phenomenon], because the phenomenon can not be there without technology of revealing, or process of formation. But again, “the great phenomenon is without formation. *Dao* is hidden without the name” [大象無形 道隱無名] The “phenomenon” 象 *Xiang* can be used in a more abstract term, and refer to the continuum of *Dao*, *Xing* and *Qi*.⁴⁵ According to this viewpoint, there is continuity between “nature” and “culture.” Indeed, there is inter-penetration between “nature” and “culture.” There is a becoming of phenomenon.

Chinese pictograms 象形字 *Xiang Xing Zi* were actual picture of the objects. Thus the character 象 is originally a picture of the elephant. A picture is a spatial representation of the object. Commentators, including Hegel and Chinese New Culture activists, hold this fact to declare the Chinese characters are too attached to nature, primitive, without mediation of speech, and dumb. This argument overlooks the

⁴⁵ Or as contemporary Chinese scholar Pang Pu suggests, “phenomenon” 象 *Xiang* can be understood as 形而中 *Xing Er Chong*, meaning “in the formation” or “within the formation.” Please see Pang, Pu. 龐樸. 1994. “Yuan Xiang (Original Phenomenon)” in *Xue Shu Ji Lin (Academic Collections)*. Vol. 3. Shang-Hai: Yuan Dong Books. 〈原象〉，收錄於《學術集林》卷三，上海遠東出版社。

particular line of evolution Chinese written language has taken. As I suggest, Chinese writing system has developed its own main principle of creating new characters, combining visual and audible elements. Such is the dual structure of figurative-phonetic characters. The “alphabetic prejudice”, which privileges alphabetic writing over other systems, is based on a fictional line of evolution from hieroglyphics to alphabet, from spatial representation to temporal order, and from nature to culture. The Hegelian movement of *Aufhebung* with its synthesis of antitheses by no means cancels the dichotomy between nature and culture. On the contrary, its whole theory is based on the presupposition that cultural is the *negation* of nature.

Chapter 4

The Grammatical Fallacies and the Problem of Universal Grammar

“Subject,” “object,” “attribute” – these distinction are fabricated and are now imposed as a schematism upon all the apparent facts. The fundamental false observation is that I believe it is I who do something, suffer something, “have” something, “have” a quality. (Nietzsche 1885 in The Will to Power. Para. 549))

Writing should consider grammar, and logic when it’s necessary. (Liu 1917: 4)

The Pai-hua is being Europeanized (as the Chinese called it) in the process of translation (both journalistic and literary). Many efforts have been made to fit the Procrustean bed: introduction of Occidental syntax, adoption of foreign grammatical frameworks as bases for the Chinese sentence, and application of punctuation to regulate and clarify Chinese linguistic structure. All these were intended, no doubt, to tell the world that we have just as much logic and are just as scientific as the West, as if poetic ambiguity and richness were a shame! (Yep 1970: xvii)

Is there a “metaphysics” outside of the Indo-European organization of the “being” function? This question is anything but ethnocentric. (Derrida 1979: 111)

1. The “Problem” of Chinese Grammar

It is commonly agreed that “modern” Chinese written language is a product of

“westernization” or “europeanization.” The so-called *Pai-Hua* in the *Pai-Hua* (Colloquial) Literature was not just the colloquial language of the “people”, but was in a certain sense “Europeanized” and constituted through a certain process. Indeed the europeanization of Chinese was one of the explicit goals of the New Culture Movement around 1920’s. Fu Si-Nian’s promotion of “Europeanized literature” 歐化文 *Ou-Hua-Wen* was the best example.¹ And it is precisely in opposing to this century-long tendency to europeanization in terms of grammar and syntax, that the first Chinese winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature for 2000, Gao Xing-Jian argued for a “purification of Chinese (written) language” 純化漢語 *Chun Hua Han Yu*.²

In 1917, pioneering colloquial poet Hu Shi (1891-1962) published his now canonized essay “A Modest Proposal for the Reform of Literature” in *New Youth*.³ “Do not neglect grammar” was one of his eight cardinal tenets of literary reform. It indicates the foreignness of the notion of grammar 文法 *Wen-Fa* to traditional Chinese literary compositions. It is not that Chinese script really has no “grammar,” or does not make “grammatical case”⁴ as Hegel declares, it is just that the traditional method of learning to *write* Chinese was “remembering (the classic texts) *by heart*” and never involved any

¹ Fu, Si-Nian. 傅斯年. 1919. “How to Compose Pai-hua Literature” in *Renaissance* 1(2). <怎樣做白話文>, 《新潮》第一卷第二號。

² See *China Times* in Taiwan 2001/2/10.
<http://forums.chinatimes.com.tw/special/ko/011.txt.htm>.

³ Hu, Shi. 胡適. 1118917. “A Modest Proposal for the Reform of Literature” in *New Youth* 2(5). Pp, 1-11. <文學改良芻議>, 《新青年》第二卷第五號。All translation is mine except when indicated otherwise.

⁴ Please see chapter 3 for Hegel’s “alphabetic prejudice” which radically devaluates

teaching of formal grammatical rules. For the New Culture activists, however, this fact showed the illogical nature of Chinese literature. Moreover, for them, Chinese grammar was for the best “insufficient,” and for the worst “laughable.”⁵ Literary europeanization is therefore in part an *intentional* practice, which aimed to transform Chinese script and Chinese mind.⁶ The opponents of this intentional literary europeanization, on the other hand, seem always fall into the banner of “purification” or “authenticity.”

The critique of literary europeanization has often focused on the *unnaturalness* of europeanized Chinese literature, without paying much attention to how the very notion of “grammar” 文法 *Wen-Fa* itself was constructed through the process of westernization, and moreover, how this notion of grammar has been connected to the key concept of modernization, i.e. the notion of “scientificity.”

Ma's Chinese Grammar (1898) was the first modern attempt to systematically apply European Latin grammar to Chinese script. Its author Ma Jian-Zhong (1845-1900) proposed the notion of a “universal grammar”⁷ and believed that the application of

Chinese written language.

⁵ Qian, Xuan-Tong. 錢玄同. 1918. “Correspondence: on Esperanto” in *New Youth* 5(2). Pp, 173-174, 177-178, 182-184. <通信：論世界語>，《新青年》第五卷第二號。P. 183.

⁶ I will further discuss this effort to transform Chinese script/mind through syntactical europeanization in chapter 6.

⁷ Noam Chomsky’s well-known notion of “universal grammar” is explicitly phonocentric. According to him, universal grammar “formulates principles that determine how each system relates *sound and meaning*.” See Chomsky. 1972. *Studies on Semantics in Generative Grammar*. New York: Mouton Publishers. P. 11.

While Chomsky’s theme is about language learning, Ma Jian Zhong’s purpose is to suggest Chinese language can be modified and become more “scientific” by applying European grammar to it.

European grammar to Chinese could help systematize Chinese script, which was critiqued for its “*lack*” of grammar and considered as illogical and a hindrance to *scientific* thinking. As contemporary Chinese linguist Shen Xiao-Long points out, Ma Jian-Zhong used the subject-verb-predicate sequence of European languages as a universal formula for making up grammatical rules, and often twisted the original structure of Chinese texts he interpreted in order to fit into this formula. For example, when analyzing the sentence, Ma often insisted on finding a “main verb” in each sentence following the model of European languages, even though it is not necessarily the case in Chinese.⁸ Perhaps the notion of “grammar” belongs to the domain of what Lydia Liu has called “tropes of equivalence”⁹, which allows cross-cultural scholars to equate certain terms from different languages without considering the history of translation.¹⁰ In Ma Jian-Zhong’s time, the term grammar was translated into Chinese as 葛郎瑪 *Ge-Lang-Ma* following the sound of grammar. Then *Ge-Lang-Ma* was replaced by 文法 *Wen-Fa* (literally “script law”), another loan term from Japanese *Kanji*

⁸ See Shen, Xiao-Long. 申小龍. 1985. *Humanism or Scientism? — on Chinese Linguistics of the 20th Century*. Shang-Hai: Xie-Li Books. 《人文精神，還是科學主義？— 20世紀中國語言學思辨錄》上海：學林出版社。Pp. 8-11.

⁹ Liu, H. Lydia. 1995. *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity China, 1900-1937*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. Pp. 3-10.

¹⁰ While as the notion of “tropes of equivalence” indicates, the illusion of equivalent commensurability between languages or cultures often overlooks the effect of translation itself on the conception of certain terms, the assumption of incommensurability commits the fallacy of *absolute* relativism. I will discuss this point later.

(Chinese character) translation.¹¹ Later some people also call it 語法 *Yu-Fa* (literally “language law”). It is important to bear in mind that the notion of “grammar” in Chinese already involved a process of cultural translation.¹²

My purpose here, however, is not to discuss the history of translation. Rather I would like to examine the particular argument that *Chinese language lacks (sufficient) grammar, and therefore is unsuitable for logical and scientific thinking*. This is the argument that not only Chinese literary reformers like Ma Jian-Zhong and Hu Shi in the early twentieth century used to underpin their practice, but also that Westerners have used to devaluate and (mis)understand Chinese language, as Hegel and others did.

Many contemporary theorists show that *the linguistic subject* of Indo-European grammatical structure – the subject-verb-object sequence – is based on and has contributed to the substantialist mode of thinking in Western metaphysics, the philosophy of “presence,” which tends to privilege substance over process, and status quo over change. The metaphysical model of this linguistic subject is the Cartesian subject who defines his being through thought or language.¹³ As early as 1942, Ernst Cassirer already pointed out that the sharp distinction between the subject, the predicate and the copula found in the Indo-European sentence was by no mean “universal” or “preeminent” in a philosophical sense. He wrote,

Logic has taught us that there are many and very important types of

¹¹ Cf. Liu, H. Lydia. 1995. *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity China, 1900-1937*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. 318.

¹² The issue of cultural translation will be discussed in chapters 5 and 6.

¹³ See Kristeva, Julia. 1984. *Revolution in Poetic Language*. Translated by Margaret

propositions that can not be reduced to that simple scheme of the sentence we find in the inflected languages.¹⁴

However, Cassirer did not overturn the logical relation assumed between patterns of language and of thought. Actually he accentuated it by basing the critique of what he called western “substantialist” mode of thinking on the connection between the linguistic pattern of Indo-European languages and western metaphysics. It is precisely the connection that Hegel made in his “alphabetic prejudice,” and that the Chinese New Cultural movement assumed in their Occidentalism and project of “complete westernization.” Indeed the assumption that the pattern of language shapes thought and beliefs appears to be permanent and prevalent. I will suggest that the problem of this kind of argument is not so much linguistic determinism, but the thesis of linguistic and cultural incommensurability.

Although the argument that Chinese grammar is insufficient for modern and scientific thinking has played a central role in the literary reform since the New Cultural Movement, it has not been elaborated, other than relying on the fact that Chinese grammar did not have certain devices the Indo-European languages have. Chinese grammar became a problem because it is not considered in terms of *difference*, but rather of *lack*. On the other hand, some western scholars have attempted to tackle the “problem” of Chinese language and grammar in detail. One would be surprised how similar some of their conclusions are with those of Chinese reformers’ nearly a century

Waller. P.14.

¹⁴ See Cassirer, Ernest. 1942. “The Influence of Language upon the Development of Scientific Thought” in *The Journal of Philosophy*. Vol. XXXIX, No.12. Pp, 309-327. P. 313.

ago. In the following sections, I will discuss some of these studies, and use them as a medium to elucidate the Occidentalist discourse of Chinese grammar.

2. The Problem of Grammatical Equivalence

It is notable that the linguistic/logical sequence subject-verb-object is foreign to Chinese language, especially classical written Chinese. This foreignness was interpreted by early modernists as an embarrassing proof that Chinese language/mind was essentially illogical, anti-logical and unsuitable for analytical and scientific thinking. In 1918, Chinese scholar Qian Xuan-Tong (1887-1939) insisted that Chinese written language was a great hindrance to the development of modern and scientific thinking. He believed that

We must abolish Chinese script in order to dispel the childish, barbarian, obstinate thought.¹⁵

Chinese language, with its meanings so obscure and grammar so imprecise, can only represent ancient primitive thought, and is absolutely incapable of representing the civilization of the new world since Larmark and Darwin.¹⁶

His reasons were twofold: Chinese script is “hieroglyphic”, not alphabetic; and it is inferior in terms of grammar. In the previous chapter, I examined the problem of the

¹⁵ See Qian, Xuan-Tong. 錢玄同. 1918. “Correspondence: China’s language Problem Nowadays” in *New Youth* 4(4). Pp. 350-356. <通信:中國今後之文字問題>, 《新青年》第四卷第四號。P. 350.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 352.

dichotomy between phonetic and pictographic writings, and of the Hegelian “alphabetic prejudice”. Here I want to clarify the issue of grammar. According to Qian, one of the most radical New Cultural activists against Chinese script, Chinese adjectives and prepositions are *insufficient*, and *in lack of* inflection in verbs.¹⁷ Needless to say, the criterion Qian pursued was the inflexive type of Indo-European languages. The campaign for modernization thus must begin with a radical transformation of Chinese language/mind. “Modern” Chinese language must make a “scientific” and “logical” *turn* in order to enter the “World History.” So is the historical background of the “unhappy tendencies” of *Pai-hua* as a poetic medium, that contemporary poet and scholar Yip Wai-lim has called “excessive *discursiveness*.”¹⁸

In an unfavorable tome similar to the New Culture movement, western scholar Alfred Bloom in 1981 claimed that Chinese language inhibited its speakers from entering into the domain of “theoretical” thinking, and therefore the level of “abstract moral” thinking, due to its lack of the syntax supporting counterfactuals, indefinite articles, and the generic concept, as compared to English.

I will argue Bloom’s diagnosis of Chinese grammar can be located in the same discursive field, in which we find both the Hegelian alphabetic prejudice and the alphabetic turn of the Chinese New Cultural movement. This field of discourse is made

¹⁷ See Qian, Xuan-Tong. 錢玄同. 1918. “Correspondence: on Esperanto” in *New Youth* 5(5). Pp, 524-526; 542-543. <通信:論世界語>,《新青年》第五卷第五號。P, 542. Also see Qian, Xuan-Tong. 錢玄同. 1918. “Correspondence: China’s language Problem Nowadays” in *New Youth* 4(4). Pp, 350-356. <通信:中國今後之文字問題>,《新青年》第四卷第四號。

¹⁸ See Yip, Wai-lim. 1970. (tr. and ed.) *Modern Chinese Poetry: Twenty Poets From the Republic of China, 1955-1965*. Iowa: University of Iowa Press. Pp. Xvi-xvii.

possible by the development of historical linguistics and cross-cultural studies since the nineteenth century. Both the New Culture movement and Bloom relate the development of western modern science to Indo-European languages; in Bloom's case, English. Rather than directly look at Chinese New Culture movement's ideology of Occidentalism, which remained relatively unelaborated during the movement, perhaps it would be better to begin here with the examination of Bloom's claim that the lack of certain grammatical functions denies Chinese speakers the entry into theoretical thinking. Bloom's argument is particularly pertinent to the subject due to his outspoken ethnocentrism and his blunt blindness to the effect of westernization on his informants' self-evaluation of Chinese language.

First of all, Bloom suggests that although there is a distinction between if 假如 *Jia Ru (chia ju)* and if-and-only-if-then 如果 *Ru Guo (ju ku)* in Chinese, Chinese speakers are still unable to appreciate the "counterfactual statements", which according to Bloom is indispensable to "theoretical thinking".

The Chinese language has no distinct lexical, grammatical, or intonational device to signal entry into the counterfactual realm, to indicate explicitly that the events have definitely not occurred and are being discussed for the purpose only of exploring the might-have-been or the might-be.¹⁹

Bloom provides no explanation about what kind of counterfactual devices are "valid"

¹⁹ Bloom, Alfred. 1981. *The Linguistic Shaping of Thought: A Study in the Impact of Language on Thinking in China and the West*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Association, Publishers. P. 16.

other than those in English. Being aware of the accusation of linguistic determinism, Bloom emphasizes that while the absence of some particular words in a certain language does not necessarily mean its speakers are incapable of thinking about those particular concepts, Chinese stands as a “special” case. The uniqueness of the Chinese case lies in the “fact” that even though some westerners not familiar with Chinese hesitate to believe it, Chinese people often “cheerfully confirm” that the counterfactual statements are “*un*Chinese,” and that it is difficult for Chinese speakers to think counterfactually.²⁰ Bloom quotes an English professor at National Taiwan University, presumably the top university in Taiwan, saying that even his best students often confuse the counterfactual. Later he quotes another professor of comparative literature at NTU, saying that Chinese language does not concern about the material on theoretical level.²¹ It appears that Bloom rests his argument heavily on evidence from his bilingual intellectual friends without considering the possibility that they already have had in mind the assumption that Chinese language is not scientific through the process of westernization and the legacy of New Culture movement.

Moreover, Bloom provides no proof other than a poorly designed experiment. He tested students’ comprehension of a series of counterfactual statements, and found that 98% of USA students got a set of questions right, compared with 7% of Chinese students. However, as many have pointed out, Bloom’s questions were written in poor Chinese. Terry Kit-Fong Au, a native Chinese speaker and psychologist at Harvard, repeated Bloom’s experiment. Unlike Bloom, however, Au prepared an idiomatic

²⁰ Bloom, Alfred. 1981. P. 17.

²¹ Bloom, Alfred. 1981. P.35.

Chinese version of the story, and asked his bilingual Chinese students to translate it into English. The results were in the reverse direction from Bloom's. Only 60% of American high school students who read the English (translation) version understood the counterfactual, whereas 97% of Au's monolingual Chinese subjects who were given the original idiomatic Chinese version grasped the significance of the counterfactual.²² Au's replication of experiment suggests it is highly possible that Bloom's conclusion is based on bad translation.

Indeed translation played a major role in western understanding of Chinese language, and in Chinese understanding of western languages, especially the *translation of grammar*. In the process of introducing western theories, translation has played a role in transforming Chinese language too. Chinese literature is "europeanized" partly because European grammar is translated along with the text.

Secondly, Bloom suggests that Chinese language can hardly think "generic concepts" because it does not have any *grammatical equivalence* of the definite article and entification. He believes that the distinctive way of marking the generic concepts in English enables the creation of "extracted theoretical entities."²³ Here, like the New Cultural activists, Bloom takes the fact that Chinese language does not have morphological change between verb, noun, and adjective, to be a major flaw in logical thinking. In his example, Bloom wrongly suggests that Chinese is unable to translate "the sincerity of Mary" 瑪麗的誠懇 *Ma Li De Cheng Ken*, and necessarily changes

²² See Au, Terry Kit-fong . 1982. "Counterfactuals: In Reply to Alfred Bloom." in *Cognition* 17: 289-302.

²³ Bloom, Alfred. 1981. P. 36.

the original sentence into “Mary is sincere.” 瑪麗是誠懇的 *Ma Li Shi Cheng Ken De*. Bloom makes the mistake because he can not appreciate the fact that in Chinese the character 誠 *Cheng* can be a verb, noun or adjective, depending on the *context*, its *position* and *relation* with other characters in the sentence. As such, in Chinese “sincerity” and “sincere” are expressed by the same character but put in a different place within the sentence.

As noted, modern Chinese linguist Zhang Shi-Lu argues that the structure of Chinese is based less on morphology and more on syntax.²⁴ Chinese language does not express entification and temporal tense through the inflexion of morphology as English and other Indo-European languages do, but through the relation and order of words. The principle of Chinese sentences is based on the *relation* between words, just like the principle of making characters, as I pointed out in the previous chapter. On the contrary, the basic element of Indo-European languages or alphabetic writing is the name, as Hegel suggested. The name is the “simple sign for the exact idea, i.e. the simple plain idea.”²⁵ Or perhaps as Derrida said, “*Nonphonetic* writing breaks the noun apart. It describes relation and not appellations.”[italics added]²⁶ Although as I discussed in the

²⁴ See Shen, Xiao-Long. 申小龍. 1985. Humanism or Scientism? — On Chinese Linguistics of the 20th Century. Shang-Hai: Xie-Li Books. 《人文精神，還是科學主義？— 20世紀中國語言學思辨錄》上海：學林出版社。P. 118.

²⁵ See Hegel, Georg Wilhelm. 1845 [1817]. *The Philosophy of Mind: Part Three of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*. Translated by William Wallace. <http://www.ets.uidaho.edu/mickelsen/ToC/Hegel%20-%20Philosophy%20of%20Mind.htm>. Section. 459.

²⁶ See Derrida, Jacques. 1974. *Of Grammatology*. Translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. The John Hopkins University Press. p. 26.

previous chapter, the notion of “nonphonetic writing” can be misleading, it is revealing that in Chinese writing system the “noun” is not an “entity” but a *relative position*. And the meaning of a character is in part conveyed by shifting with its position in the sentence.

Last but not least, Bloom argues that the so-called “de” law of Chinese [的 *De*, which in general can be translated to “of”] restrains the descriptive clause of the sentence and will make the sentence too long to be comprehensive if one does not restrain the descriptive part.²⁷ This again is a wrong assertion. Bloom overlooks the often ellipsis of “De” in Chinese. It is true that in Chinese by adding “De” as a suffix to a noun makes an adjective, or pronoun. But it is only the case in *Pai-Hua* (colloquial or modern) Chinese, and not in *Wen-Yan* (classic) written Chinese. In classic writing, the character’s being a noun or a verb, or an adjective, is basically dependent on its relative position in the sentence. Even in *Pai-Hua*, “de” is often elliptic. Bloom’s analysis of the so-called “de” law is confined to *Pai-Hua*, which is already europeanized grammatically, and *tends to* insist on the morphological distinction of noun and adjective. That is, ironically, the ineffective Chinese language Bloom judged against Indo-European languages is actually the europeanized version, whereas the classic Chinese script is more economic in terms of the length of the sentence.

3. *The Problem of Being*

²⁷ Bloom, Alfred. 1981. *The Linguistic Shaping of Thought: A Study in the Impact of Language on Thinking in China and the West*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Association, Publishers. P.42.

Another major grammatical difference between Chinese and European inflexive languages is regarding the nature of the verb. In Chinese the former the verb is tenseless, and there is no equivalence of the verb “to be.” The tense of a sentence is indicated by temporal phrases or remains undetermined. The verb “to be”, however, involves more complicated questions, e.g. the relation between the subject and the predicate or object

The question of *being* has been at the heart of western metaphysics. Aristotle deals with the question of “to be” or being in the Book VII of his *Metaphysics* written in 350 B.C.

Indeed the question which was raised of old and is raised now and always, and is always the subject of doubt, viz. *what being is*, is just the question, *what is substance?* [italics added]²⁸

The notion of “substance” is the most determinant for Aristotle. While Aristotle distinguishes between the dimensions of existence and predication regarding the meaning of “to be”, he asserts that the former is the primary.

While 'being' has all these senses, obviously that which 'is' primarily is the 'what', which indicates the substance of the thing. For when we say of what quality a thing is, we say that it is good or bad, not that it is three cubits long or that it is a man; but when we say *what it is*, we do not say 'white' or 'hot' or 'three cubits long', but 'a man' or 'a 'god'. And all other things are said *to be* because they are, some of them, quantities of that which is in this primary sense, others qualities of it,

²⁸ See Aristotle , *Metaphysics* , VII, part I.
<http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/metaphysics.7.vii.html>.

others affections of it, and others some other determination of it.²⁹

[italics added]

In this passage, the logical order of the sequence of *subject-be-predicate* is affirmed. Aristotle asserts the primary existence of the subject, or the substance, and the secondary existential position of the predicate. The existence of the latter is dependent on the former. That is why Martin Heidegger declares that the question of “being” is the fundamental question of [western] metaphysics. Being with capital B becomes *the* ontological concept for Heidegger and others, partly because of the grammatical import of the verb “to be” in the Indo-European languages. Does that means languages outside this group are unable to appreciate the concept of Being? Or to put it another way -- Is this even a valid question at all?

The philosophical status of Chinese thought has been put in question ever since Hegel’s engagement with the “Oriental thought.” Jonathan Rée points to the European devaluation of Chinese thought as a “religious world-view”, as opposed to (real) “philosophy” in the western sense, or so-called rigorous conceptual systems.³⁰ This is one way the western treats its Other. Another way is to use the Other to make a self-critique. Derrida’s discuss of the European treatment of “non-phonetic” writing is an exemplar of the latter. Postcolonial theorist Spivak accuses Derrida of committing a “reverse ethnocentrism” when he suggests that logocentrism is “a property of the

²⁹ Aristotle , *Metaphysics*.

³⁰ Rée, Jonathan. 2001. “The Translation of Philosophy” in *New Literary History*. Pp. 223-257. The Johns Hopkins University Press. P, 241.

West".³¹ Apparently there is the tension between universalism and relativism, both in their own ways can be politically useful or dangerous in specific situations. Spivak seems to suggest that one must commit "ethnocentrism" if he does not presuppose that every culture is endowed with the *same* "properties", at least in terms of "logocentrism" as a cultural property. However, this version of cultural universalism might not be truer or more viable than relativism, although both often arise out of the motive of resistance. Perhaps the question is not so much about the universality of some particular cultural properties as it is about the flowing horizon of *cultural translation*, which always involves a process of cultural and linguistic trans-creation. That is to say, when western "logocentrism" is being translated into various cultural understandings and cultural efforts, the notion of Western Culture, as a *translational effect*, becomes a field of negotiation, which instigates the non-western search for the "equivalence" of "logocentrism."

Many modern Chinese philosophers have tried to tackle the problem of [the lack of] "being" in Chinese philosophy. For example, the eminent Confucian Mou Zong-San claims that whereas western metaphysics is grounded on the notion of "to be," Chinese "metaphysics" is grounded on the notion of "to beget" 生 *Sheng*.³² It seems modern Chinese philosophers often find themselves having to look for some kind of philosophical equivalence for western notion of "being" to justify the status or existence of Chinese "metaphysics." As such, the connotation and problematics of the notion

³¹ See Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 1974. "Translator's Preface" for Derrida, Jacques. 1974. *Of Grammatology*. The John Hopkins University Press. P, lxxxii.

³² See Mou Zong-San. 牟宗三. 1997. *Lectures on Four Causes*. Taipei: Goose Lake

“*metaphysics*” itself are in general overlooked.

In a recent article on the issue of translatability, Roger Hart deals with the common thesis of cultural untranslatability between China and the West.³³ I agree when Hart argues that linguistic differences is very different from a theory of radical conceptual incommensurability split along a purported China/West divide.³⁴ Between the strategies of relativism and universalism, as I emphasize, there is a growing *space of translation* which allows us to articulate conceptual differences without resorting to the binary scheme of either/or.

In his much noted essay “‘Being’ in Western Philosophy Compared with Shih/Fei and Yu/Wu in Chinese Philosophy,” A. C. Graham deals with the problem of translating “to be” into Chinese.³⁵ He suggests that there can be found six functions of “to be” in classic Chinese, respectively indicating existence, copula linking nouns, identity, role, copula with adjective, and copula with location. These six functions are performed by different characters in classic Chinese. Graham points to the fact that the verb “to be” of the Indo-European languages performs a variety of functions which most languages distinguish sharply. As I point out above, Aristotle keeps a distinction between the

Press. 《「四因說」演講錄》，鵝湖出版社。

³³ Hart, Roger. 1999. “Translating Worlds: Incommensurability and Problems of Existence in Seventeenth-Century China” in *Positions: East Asia Culture Critique*. Volume 7. Number 1. Spring 1999. Pp.95-128.

³⁴ Hart, Roger. 1999. P. 108.

³⁵ Graham, A. C. 1990 [1986]. “‘Being’ in Western Philosophy Compared with Shih/Fei and Yu/Wu in Chinese Philosophy,” in *Studies in Chinese Philosophical Literature*. State University of New York Press. Pp. 322-359.

existential and predicative dimensions of the verb “to be” and makes the former the primary metaphysical question by privileging the subject over the predicate. Through the verb “to be,” another noun (e.g., a man), a name (Charles), a role (a father), an adjective (strong), and a location (in office) all seem to become the “attributes” of the subject, or existentially subordinate to the subject. Or to use Aristotle’s terms, they only exist as quantities or qualities *of* the subject/substance. This is what I would like to call the “fallacy of grammatical subjectivity.”

Nietzsche had offered a critique of this fallacy, with which, even general verbs, as well as the verb “to be” become the predicate of a subject.

For in the past one believed in ‘the soul’ as one believed in grammar and the grammatical subject: one said “I” is the condition, “think” is the predicate and conditioned -- *thinking is an activity to which a subject must be thought of as cause*. Then one tried with admirable artfulness and tenacity to fathom whether one could not get out of this net -- whether the reverse was not perhaps true: “think” the condition, “I” conditioned; “I” thus being only a synthesis produced by thinking.³⁶ [italics added]

The Cartesian cogito is based on a formulation of the grammatical custom that “adds a doer to every deed.”³⁷ This formulation is exacerbated by the verb “to be”, especially when copulative being is often conflated with existential being in Indo-European

³⁶ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1989. *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy for the Future*. Tr. and ed. by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage. Part III. Paragraph 54.

³⁷ Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1968. *The Will to Power*. Tr. and ed. by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage. Paragraph 484.

languages, as Graham points out. That is to say, the copulative relation between the grammatical subject and the predicate is often imputed with existential import. The verb “to be” is therefore imbued with metaphysical bearings in western thought. It is against this background that Derrida asks the following question.

Is there a “metaphysics” outside of the Indo-European organization of the “being” function? This question is anything but ethnocentric. Far from suggesting that other languages might be *deprived* of excellent philosophical and metaphysical vocations, it avoids projecting our particular forms of “history” and “culture” outside of the West [italics original]³⁸

In tackling this question, Derrida takes the issue with the common thesis that language determines the categories of philosophy. He employs the theory of linguist Emile Benveniste who believes that Aristotle’s philosophy of “categories of thought” was determined by the peculiar categories of the Greek language. Benveniste distinguishes the “fully-fledged use of the verb ‘to be’”, which is peculiar to Indo-European languages and metaphysics, and the “grammatical mark of the equivalence” (of the verb “to be”), which is universal to all and those languages that lexically lack the verb “to be.” While critiquing Benveniste’s ethnocentrism, Derrida employs this distinction and suggests that what causes the fallacy of subjectivity that Nietzsche had so forcefully critiqued is not the universal grammatical function of “to be” as a copula, but its

³⁸ See Derrida, Jacques. 1979. “The Supplement of Copula: Philosophy before Linguistics” in (ed.) 1979. *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism* edited by Josué V Harari. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. P. 111.

“lexicological” function.³⁹

What Derrida means by “lexicological” or lexical, is about the semantic and etymological connotations of the verb “to be” or any other particular word. Generally speaking, the lexical is the material part of language, while grammar is about the articulation of categories. Through everyday uses and philosophical explication and expansion of the lexicon, and perhaps also through the process of translation, its etymological connotations accumulate, transform and build their own history and overflow its grammatical form. Or rather the grammatical form is something added to it. Perhaps that is why the major part of Martin Heidegger’s *Introduction to Metaphysics* is the discussion of the (Greek) etymology of the verb “to be.” Western metaphysics relies enormously on the *uses* of Greek language, rather than the grammatical category of being itself.

Against the common thesis that languages determines the mental framework, Derrida argues that it is philosophy itself that not only exists before linguistics as a science but also provides the concepts that modern linguistics work on. The relation between language and thought is not one of causality. The notion of “category” itself is already a philosophical one, or imbued with metaphysical bearings. As matter of fact, Derrida refused to determine the (causal) relation between language and thought. Modern linguistics as a science is both dependent on philosophy for its basic concepts, and on the “cross-cultural”/colonial historical condition since the nineteenth century. As such, the title of Derrida’s essay is “The Supplement of Copula: Philosophy *before* Linguistics.” However, the word “supplement” in the title could also have been

³⁹ Derrida, Jacques. 1979. P. 84, and P, 114.

italicized. The lexical *absence* and grammatical *equivalence* of “to be” in other languages should not be thought as *supplement*, but rather as “an original possibility”, again to borrow Derrida’s term.⁴⁰

Derrida did not elaborate on this distinction between the grammatical and the lexical, which he stressed as the foundation of all the discourses about the presence or absence of the verb “to be.” His argument also relied on this distinction, stressing the universality of the “grammatical mark” of “to be,” and the historically and culturally specific metaphysical expansion of the lexicon “to be.” In this distinction, however, as I contend, the notion of grammar itself seems to be de-historized. The effect of the lexical connotations and expansion on the notion of grammar itself is overlooked. It is likely that the “grammatical mark” of “to be” is *not* universal, that the “supplement” is not always already there, and that it was read into other languages anyway through the deep-seated prejudice of the verb “to be.”

Here I believe the emergence of “grammar” 文法 *Wen-Fa* as a linguistic concept in modern Chinese offers a historically specific example of how this distinction could be constituted and *used* to underpin a broader project of modernity in a post-colonial situation, even though such a project was perhaps based on the grammatical fallacies imported from the West.

In Chinese speech and writing, both the subject and the copula are often elliptic or simply not necessarily, grammatically and lexically. Does it mean Chinese is able to

⁴⁰ Derrida, Jacques. 1979. P. 104.

avoid the fallacy of grammatical subjectivity? Does it mean Chinese is therefore deprived of clear subjective consciousness and analytic object of knowledge? Perhaps rather than trying to answer this set of questions, which are most likely misplaced, the better way is to look at how Chinese written language has been transformed in the process of adopting western standard of “grammar” and of translating western thought/language.

As Graham points out, there is no single grammatical equivalent of the verb “to be” in classic Chinese, but one can find separate equivalents for the six grammatical functions. They are 有/無 *You/Wu* (existence/not exist), 是/非 *Shi/Fei* (general copula linking nouns), 即 *Ji* (identity), 爲 *Wei* (role), none or 矣 *Yi* (copula with adjective), 在 *Zai* (location). In some cases, the copula linking nouns and adjectives is nevertheless elliptic, and a final particle may be added to the juxtaposed nouns or noun and adjective. Here let us consider the order of words in classic Chinese sentences, using Graham’s examples – 白馬馬也 *Bai Ma Ma Ye* “(A) white horse (is) (a) horse,” 人性善 *Ren Xing Shan* “Human nature (is) good.” For the first sentence, if we translate the order of characters directly into English, it will become: “white horse horse Ye.” *Ye* is a final particle. And for the second sentence, it will be: “Human nature good.” In both sentences, there is neither copula nor verb. They are “nominal sentences,” to borrow Benveniste’s term, in which “a zero morpheme, the pause, assures the conjunction of the terms.”⁴¹ It however is a pause in speech, and often invisible and without leaving any (“grammatical”) mark in writing.

⁴¹ As quoted in Derrida. 1979. P. 114.

In modern Chinese, however, there is a *seemingly* precise equivalent of the verb “to be” 是 *Shi* (as in *Shi/fei*). Etymologically, 是 *Shi* means “this” or “such,” that is its meaning in classic Chinese. For instance, 佛如是說 *Fo Ru Shi Shuo*, “Buddha as such say” (order of characters), meaning “Such (this) was what Buddha said.” In modern Chinese, 是 *Shi* is used as a common affirmative copula linking nouns. For instance, 我是女人 *Wo Shi Nu Ren* “I am a woman,” 他是男人 *Ta Shi Nan Ren* “he is a man”, 我們都是人 *Wo Men Dou Shi Ren* “we are all human beings.” Here “am”, “is” and “are” are all translated into Chinese as the same character 是 *Shi*, without any inflection. But then again, in another sense, they really mean “I this woman”, “he this man”, “we these humans.” They thus are also “nominal sentences.”

As Benveniste recognizes, the syntactic position the verb “to be” occupies is often an *empty space*, sometimes grammatically invisible as I would say. *The verb “to be” does not signify anything.* It is without any specific meanings. Were it be Chinese, the verb “to be” would have been called a 虛字 *Xu-Zi* “empty character,” as traditional Chinese study of characters had called those characters devoid of specific meanings, but play important role of assisting and completing the syntactic meanings of 實字 *Shi-Zi* the “substantive character.”

4. Rethinking the Notion of “Universal Grammar” – The Problem of 詞類 *Zi Lei*

“Classes of Words” in Modern Chinese Linguistics

The “empty character” 虛字 *Xu-Zi* is a key concept in 文字學 *Wen-Zi Xue*, the

traditional study of writing and script, whose subject-matter, unlike modern linguistics, is *writing and writing only*. The discussion of the “empty character” is even richer in quantity, because a good essay or poem often depends on the uses and arrangement of empty characters. As famous modern Chinese scholar of *Wen-Zi Xue*, Tang Lan noted, there is no equivalence of discipline in western academia that can cover the scope of *Wen-Zi Xue*. Nor linguistics, which focuses on speech, neither philology, which takes ancient Greek and Latin scripts as the subject-matter, serves a proper translation of *Wen-Zi Xue*. Tang translated it into English as “The Science of Chinese Characters.”⁴² The fate of *Wen-Zi Xue*, however, has been as rugged as its object, Chinese characters and writing, since the late nineteenth century when Chinese intellectuals started employing the formulation of Indo-European grammar to judge and examine Chinese writing.

In *Ma's Chinese Grammar* (1898), the first modern attempt to systematically apply Latin grammar to the analysis of Chinese script, Ma Jian-Zhong dealt with two related topics that traditional *Wen-Zi Xue* never touched on – the analysis of the sentence (句讀 *Ju Du*), and the classes of the character (字類 *Zi Lei*). Here Ma Jian-Zhong used the notion of “classes of words” (or “parts of speech”) in western linguistics to analyze the structure of Chinese sentences in classic texts. In the traditional study of characters, there are three subfields that respectively focus on the figurative structure (體制, 或字書), original meanings (訓詁), and the phonology of characters (聲韻). None of them discuss the structure of sentences or the “classes” of the character or sets of characters as a definite word. This “omission” might have perfectly good reasons. Firstly, Chinese

⁴² Tang, Lan. 唐蘭. 1949. *The Study of Chinese Characters*. (*The Study of Chinese Wen*

“words” is composed of one character or a combination of two or more than characters. It is according to the standard of the inflexive type of Indo-European languages, that the New Culture activist Qian Xuan-Tong once said Chinese adjectives and prepositions are “insufficient”, and Chinese verbs “lack” inflection. Secondly, unlike the closed structure of an Indo-European sentence, a sentence in Chinese, is a grammatically *open* formulation. According to the American Heritage College Dictionary, a “sentence” is “a grammatical unit that is syntactically independent and has a subject that is expressed or understood and a predicate that contains a finite verb.”⁴³ On the contrary, a Chinese “sentence” is a syntactically independent unit, which does not necessary contain a subject, a predicate or a main verb. The crucial definition of a sentence is the *combination of characters and delimitation of statements*. Ma Jian-Zhong quotes the canonized classic on literature 文心雕龍 *Wen-Xin-Diao-Long* (*The Heart of Literature Carves the Dragon*) written in the fifth century,

Every word has a certain position. Position the word in a certain sentence. A sentence is a limitation. The limitation is complete through the combination of the characters and the division of the (semantic) territory. The combination of the characters matches the characters to each other. The division of the (semantic) territory completes the meaning of the statement.

置言有位 位言有句 句者 局也 局言者 聯字以分疆 所謂聯字者

and Zi). 《中國文字學》，文光圖書公司印行。P. 2.

⁴³ *The American Heritage College Dictionary*. The third edition. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company. P. 1242.

字與字相配也 分疆者 蓋辭意已全也

Ma Jian-Zhong distinguishes among four levels of Chinese writing, 字 *Zi* (characters), 詞 *Ci* (words), 句 *Ju* (sentences), and 文 *Wen* (text). Among them, the definition of a “word” is the most ambiguous. Because it is at this link, that Ma Jian-Zhong and other modern Chinese scholars tried to insert the western notion of “grammar” – the classes of words, including the subject, predicate, verb, adjective, and so on, which complete a “sentence” in the Indo-European sense. In this attempt, Ma Jian-Zhong inserted the western notion of the “classes of words” into the traditional distinction between the “substantive” and “empty” characters, in order to read into Chinese sentences those grammatical units he believed were elements of the “universal grammar” for all human languages.

The problem 詞類 *Zi Lei* of “classes of words” has been the central issue in modern Chinese linguistics since Ma Jian-Zhong and is still an unresolved issue. Because of the fact that Chinese language is not of inflexive type, and the fundamental structural difference between *Zi* (character) and “word”, modern Chinese scholars who took pains to apply western grammar to Chinese have proposed several different hypotheses. As the pioneer, Ma Jian-Zhong based his argument heavily on the traditional Chinese theory of reading.

Every character has its meaning. Some characters have more than one meaning. Therefore, the ancients said “the meaning emerges from the reading of the text.” As the meaning [of the character] changes, its class also changes. The class of the character is also the class of its

meaning. ... *The character does not have a definite meaning, and therefore does not have a definite class.* In order to define its class, one has to know the parts before and after the character. What we call a “text” *Wen* is composed of sentences, just as a colorful woven texture. That is why it is called *Wen* [weaving]. In order to know the text, one has to understand the sentences. [italics added]

字各有義 而一字有不正一義者 古人所謂望文生義此也 義不同而其類亦別焉 故字類者 亦類其義焉耳。 ... 字無定義故無定類。而欲知其類，當先知上下之文以何如耳 夫文者 集句而成 如錦繡然 故謂之文 欲知文 當識句⁴⁴

In the above quote, the basic unit of analysis seems to be *Zi*, the single character. But when Ma Jian-Zhong analyzes the structure of sentences, the unit became *Ci* – now often used to translate the “word” – which sometimes is a single character, but often includes a sequence of characters. As such, the distinction between *Zi* and *Ci* is relative and not absolute, but nevertheless crucial in the sense that the latter is used for the particular purpose of the analysis of sentences. It should be noted that the notion of *Ci* 詞 as the translation-equivalent of the “word” is the product of a modern translational effort, and has transformed its original meaning in classic Chinese.⁴⁵ Ma Jian-Zhong’s

⁴⁴ Ma, Jian-Zhong. 馬建忠. 1974. [1898]. *Ma’s Chinese Grammar*. Taipei: Shang-Wu Books. 《馬氏文通》上，台北：台灣商務印書館。P. 7.

⁴⁵ In the most quoted classic on Chinese characters, 說文解字 *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* (100), it says “what is inside the meaning and outside the words (or speech)” [意內而言外 *Yi Nei Er Yan Wai*] is called *Ci*. *Ci* 詞 is also a genre of poetry fashioned in Song period.

hypothesis is that “the character does not have a definite meaning, and therefore does not have a definite class” 字無定義故無定類. This hypothesis is still in harmony with the traditional *Wen-Zi Xue*. As I pointed out above in the second section, in many cases, a character can be a verb, noun or adjective, depending on the context, its position and relation with other words in the sentence.

The modern linguists after Ma Jian-Zhong, however, attempted to completely replace *Zi* with *Ci* as the unit of analysis. Li Jin-Xi published *New Chinese Grammar* 《新著國語文法》 in 1924, and defined *Ci* as the basic unit of grammatical classes of words. No matter how many characters a *Ci* is composed of, as far as it expresses an *idea*, it is called *Ci*.⁴⁶ From then on, *Zi* (the character) is no longer treated as the unit of analysis in Chinese modern study of grammar. For instance, famous scholar Lu Shu-Xiang believes *Zi* as the basic unit is only suitable to the study of classic Chinese.⁴⁷ Likewise, another famous linguist Wang Li claims, “*Zi* has no position in grammar.”⁴⁸ And the traditional categories of *Xu-Zi* [empty character] and *Shi-Zi* [substantive character] are also often renamed as *Xu-Ci* [empty word] and *Shi-Ci* [substantive word]. This common renunciation of *Zi* as a valid unit of linguistic analysis has been called an

⁴⁶ See Xu, Tong-Qiang. 徐通鏘. 1994. “*Zi* (Characters) and the Methodology of the Study of Chinese Language. – On the ‘Indo-European’ Gaze”, < “字” 和漢語研究的方法論 — 兼評漢語研究中的“印歐語的眼光” > in *The Teaching Chinese Language to the World (Shi Jie Han Yu Jiao Xue)* 《世界漢語教學》 199403, pp 0-14.

⁴⁷ Lu, Shu-Xiang. 呂叔湘. 1979. *The Problems of the Analysis of Chinese Grammar*. Shang-Wu Books. 《漢語語法分析問題》，商務印書館。P. 14.

⁴⁸ Wang, Li. 王力. 1990. “The Limits of *Ci* (the word) and phrase” < 詞和句語的界限問題 > , in *Collections of Wang Li's Works*. Vol. 16. 《王力文集》第十六卷，山東教育出版社。P. 237.

imposition of the “Indo-European linguistic gaze” 印歐語的眼光 by an important modern linguist Zhu De-Xi. This phrase was quoted by contemporary linguist Xu Tong-Qiang who argues for a revival of *Zi* as the basic unit of analysis in the study of Chinese grammar.⁴⁹ From 1938 to 1943, there was a national discussion on the “the reform of Chinese grammar” 文法革新討論, in which many scholars suggested one should take the particular Chinese “grammatical fact” seriously, instead of mechanically imitate the western formulation. For example, Chen Wang-Dao proposed the hypothesis of *function* 功能說, and suggested the classes of the words should be decided by its organizing function in the sentence. Fang Quang-Dao proposed a “morphology in a broad sense” 廣義形態學, and suggested one should look at the relation between words and the combination of words in order to solve the question of classes of Chinese words. Since the beginning, Chinese linguists have oscillated between the paradigm of western grammar and the particularity of Chinese structure of sentences. Till now, the problem of the “classes of words” remains the central issue for modern Chinese linguistics, and the notion of *Ci* (the word), instead of *Zi* (the character) remains the basic unit of analysis.

Now I want to examine the crucial difference between the Chinese character (*Zi* 字) and the Indo-European “word,” and perhaps more importantly, between Chinese *Ci* (word) and the Indo-European “word.” In Chinese, a “word” or 語詞 *Yu-Zi* in the modern sense is a character or a sequence of characters composed of two or more

⁴⁹ See the note 43 above.

characters. Unlike the component letters in alphabetical writing, a Chinese character is already a complete linguistic sign, with a dual structure of figurative-phonetic parts, and with one definite sound and semantic meaning. The grammatical class of a Chinese “word” is relatively indeterminate, just as that of the characters. For example, in classic Chinese, the character 美 *Mei* can mean beauty, or beautiful, or beautify, depending on its position in the sentence and its relation with other characters. In modern Chinese, the noun “beauty”, the adjective “beautiful” and the verb “beautify” usually expressed as three different words 美 *Mei* , 美的 *Mei-De*, 美化 *Mei-Hua*. However, as I pointed out in the second section, this rule still lacks absolute certainty. Oftentimes the suffix *De* or *Hua* can be elliptic without impairing the syntactic completion of the sentence. For example, people say 你好美 *Ni Hao Mei* (word order: “you so beauty), meaning “you are so beautiful.” Here not only there is no verb “to be”, the adjective “beautiful” is without the suffix “*De*.” Indeed it would sound awkward and clumsy if one says 你是好美的 *Ni Shi Hao Mei De* (word order: you are so beautiful) in Chinese, even though it would be “grammatical correct”. 美化 *Mei-Hua* (beautify) has become a common term. Still in some cases, the suffix *Hua* is elliptic. For example, another common term 美容 *Mei-Rong* (word order: beauty face), means “to beautify your face.” The delimitation of a Chinese “word” is often indeterminate and dependent on the context. Again as Liu Xie (466-522) said in *The Heart of Literature Carves the Dragon*,

A sentence is a limitation. The limitation is complete through the combination of the characters and the division of the (semantic)

territory. The combination of the characters matches the characters to each other. The division of the (semantic) territory completes the meaning of the statement.

In Chinese, the completion of a “word” as well as a “sentence” is *a semantic completion of a syntactic territory*, which is dependent on a continual and diffused semantic horizon without a strict and discrete grammatical formulation.

On the other hand, in Indo-European languages, a word has a definite linear phonetic structure. According to the American Heritage College Dictionary, third edition, a word is

A sound or a combination of sounds, or its representation in writing or printing, that symbolizes and communicates a meaning and may consist of a single morpheme or of a combination of morphemes.⁵⁰

And a morpheme is

“[A] meaningful linguistic unit consisting a word, such as *man*, or a word element, such as *-ed* in *walked*, that cannot be divided into smaller meaning parts.”⁵¹

Some scholars unsuccessfully attempted to compare the notion of “morpheme” to the Chinese character, and used it to discuss the construction of Chinese “word.” The radical structural difference between a morpheme and a character is obvious. And the *continuity* between a *Zi* character and a *Ci* “word” in Chinese is not comparable to the

⁵⁰ *The American Heritage College Dictionary*. The third edition. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company. P. 1553.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, P. 888.

construction in Indo-European words.

As Zhao Yuan-Ren, who had been called a “genius linguist” once said,
 In the mind of Chinese people, 字 *Zi* (the character) is the main theme,
 and 詞 *Ci* (the “word”) is in many senses, a subsidiary subtitle.
 在中國人的觀念中 ‘字’ 是中心主題 ‘詞’ 則在許多不同的意義上都
 是輔助性的副題 ⁵²

The notion of “universal grammar” has played a double-edged role in the career of modern Chinese linguistics. It both enables and restrains its scope and approach. In the modern history of Chinese grammatical study, there has been a tension between the thesis of linguistic and cultural incommensurability, and the thesis of universalism. On the one hand, there is the claim that Chinese thought is conditioned and held back by the inherent structure of Chinese language – a claim whose logical result is linguistic incommensurability. On the other hand, there is the assertion the “universal grammar” that is established in Indo-European languages can apply to Chinese language/writing.

The argument that *Chinese language is in lack of (sufficient) grammar, and therefore is unsuitable for logical and scientific thinking*, which presents an unhappy relativism, is often uneasily combined with the glorious notion of *universal grammar* which is a saviour asserting the redemption of Chinese language/writing from the (not yet) logicalized chaos. The continual controversy around the unresolved issue of the grammatical “classes of words” in Chinese since the publication of *Ma's Chinese*

⁵² Zhao, Yuan-Ren. 趙元任. 1992. , *The Expansion and Development of Chinese Modern Linguistics*. Qing-Hua University Press. 《中國現代語言學的開拓與發展》, 清華大學出版社。P. 284.

Grammar in 1895 proves that the strategy of universalism is not an easy road towards the redemption of cultural dignity.

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Chapter 5

Trans-creative Cosmopolitanisms as Molecular Translational Effects

I was a man of the village. I traveled to other villages at the age of nine, to other provinces at seventeen. I had no ambition and was ignorant of the world. Before I knew it I was jolted, stuck and dictated by the great trends of the nineteenth century world, and had no choice but become a man of the nation, and a man of the world [a cosmopolitan]. (Liang Qi-Chao, 1899)

It is true that one imagines with difficulty a translation, in the current sense of the term, whether it is competent or not, without some philein, without some love or friendship, without some “lovence” [aimance], as you would say, borne [portée] toward the thing, the text, or the other to be translated. Even if hatred can sharpen the vigilance of a translator and motivate a demystifying interpretation, this hatred still reveals an intense form of desire, interest, indeed fascination. (Jacques Derrida, 1995[1993])

1. The Paradoxes of Cosmopolitanism

In recent years there has been an interdisciplinary rethinking of “cosmopolitanism” in relation to nationalism, postcoloniality and global capitalism, in the light of a growing sense of a world community. Generally speaking, this discussion points to two paradoxes of cosmopolitanism as a cultural ideal. On the one hand, there is cosmopolitanism reconsidered in the plural, *cosmopolitanisms*, shaping various dimensions of today’s global life, especially in the cultural field, as well as a recovery

of different historical practices of cosmopolitanism outside the western tradition.¹ For instance, Sheldon Pollock compares the different experiences of linguistic cosmopolitanism between the Latin and Sanskrit communities from 1000 to 1500, and how the communities started to crumble and took a vernacular turn. Pollock presents the South Asian historical experience of “virtual cosmopolitanism of the vernaculars”, which was based on cultural and linguistic accommodation to the conditions of the region one enters rather than any political regulation as in the case of European emerging nations.² Compared to Europe and India, the Chinese experience of linguistic cosmopolitanism after the unification of written characters in BC 220 (Qin dynasty) and the formation of *Han Zi* (漢字 Chinese character) Cultural Circle around 1000’s onwards including Vietnam, Korea and Japan, took another divergent line of development which showed an intimate relation to the political expansion of Chinese Empire. As such, some have pointed out that it is a form of Chinese cultural imperialism. This East Asian *Han Zi* Cultural Circle only began to crumble in the twentieth century when western cultural imperialism arrived with its invincible military and economic power. Indeed, Chinese intellectuals themselves, especially with the New Culture Movement in 1910’s to 1920’, started to doubt the very value of Chinese script as a whole in every dimension, as I discussed in the previous chapters. This brief review already points to the inexorable interconnection between culture, politics and economy.

¹ See Breckenridge, Carol A, Sheldon Pollock and Homi K. Bhabha. Eds. 2002. *Cosmopolitanism*. Durham & London: Duke University Press.

² Pollock, Sheldon. 2002. “Cosmopolitan and Vernacular in History” in Breckenridge, Pollock and Bhabha. Eds. *Cosmopolitanism*. Pp.15-53.

Our first paradox of cosmopolitanism as *cultural imperialism* is therefore that subordination to the dominant culture, whether it is “foreign” or not, is never completely coercive, but always involves a more or less voluntary composition which combines heterogeneous cultural elements. Many postcolonial theorists like Homi Bhabha emphasizes this voluntary process of creating a hybrid culture. Chinese New Culture activists’ advocating “westernization” as a resource for recreating a New Culture and New writing was a pertinent example.

On the other hand, in the recent discussion there is a critique of cultural and linguistic cosmopolitanism in the light of the uneven development in political and economical globalization.³ For instance, Pheng Cheah criticizes what he calls the hybridity theory of Homi Bhabha and James Clifford, which invoke a certain version of cosmopolitanism based on the presumed freedom of cultural and linguistic (re)creation. He argues that they have obscured “the material dynamics of nationalism in neocolonial globalization”, and overlooked the “given culture” -- that is when culture itself is no longer the domain of human freedom creativity as opposed to nature as the given but has become itself a reified system of culture interpenetrated with political economy⁴ Perhaps not without good reason, Cheah’s notion of “given culture” unwittingly points to the case of Chinese New Culture I am dealing with. In the face of powerful western “cultural imperialism” the non-western cultures often had no choice but to doubt their

³ See Cheah, Pheng and Bruce Robbins. Eds. 1998. *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling beyond the Nation*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

⁴ Cheah, Pheng. 1998. “Given Culture: Rethinking Cosmopolitical Freedom in Transnationalism” in Cheah and Robbins. Eds. *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling beyond the Nation*. Pp. 290-328.

own traditional ways of living, thinking and writing, and to desire to transform them, and to appropriate the “western model” in their knowledge or imagination as a standard. In this process, however, any reformers or revolutionaries of “culture” must face its obstinacy. By this I mean the givenness of culture, which always runs against the desire to transform, whether the goal is hybrid creativity or westernization. Such is the paradox of cosmopolitanism as a *cultural (re)creation*, that is, the appropriation and transformation of culture is never completely free, but always involves an explicit or implicit standard which usually reflects the dominant culture. Therefore, the project of westernization like Chinese New Culture movement is often in need of a seemingly detached discursive device like cosmopolitanism itself to move across the boundaries between West and East (or China).

These two paradoxes have long haunted cosmopolitanism as a human ideal of world community. The notion of “cosmopolitanism” itself lacks a clear definition other than a general attitude of “being an citizen of the world.” First of all, its meaning is always historically situated. Both the Greek Stoic cosmopolitan worldview and Kant’s well documented proposal of interstate federation in *Perpetual Peace* happened in specific historical conditions. It is important to note that the antithesis between cosmopolitanism and nationalism now dominates the contemporary discussion is no less historical and only appeared in the nineteenth century.⁵

⁵ See Malcomson, Scott L. “The Varieties of Cosmopolitan Experience” in Cheah, Pheng and Bruce Robbins. Eds. *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling beyond the Nation*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. P. 233.

Second of all, the meaning of cosmopolitanism is also *culturally* situated in the sense that one can often find in *other* (non-western) cultures different notions and practices of cosmopolitanism. With the various ever-increasing technologies of global communication, the human race has never been more aware of “cultural” differences *and* closer to a bringing together of these differences. The increasing intensity of communication entails the increasing practice of cross-cultural translation. The idea that every “society” has its own “culture”, or a “societal culture” which often implied the metaphor of an organism as we see in early sociology and other social sciences, has its origin in modern anthropology, that had a kinship to European colonialism. Anthropological/colonial encounters between West and East, Europe and non-Europe, had made “culture” one of the most fashionable terms in the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Moreover, this notion of culture was/is often connected to another colonial notion of race. Culture is often conceived as the historical shell of race, which is at the same time spiritual and corporeal. This bio-image of culture is important here. As we will see in Chinese New Culture movement and the ensued debate about complete westernization there is a metaphor of food and race/body at work in the discursive formation.

Since the beginning of twentieth century, whenever we talk about cosmopolitanism in the contemporary globe, it must more or less be a version of “cultural” cosmopolitanism even when one’s focus is on political federation, globalization or transnational mobility. The necessity and urgency of (cultural and linguistic) translation indicates two things. On the one hand, it points to the irreducible differences and partitions between cultural and linguistic groups, and the barriers any ideal of

cosmopolitanism must face up to. On the other hand, it points to a growing space of translation that allows us to articulate cultural differences without resorting to the binary scheme of either/or.

2. The Becoming of Trans-creative Cosmopolitanism in Early Modern China

In this chapter I want to investigate the discursive field around the New Culture generations, focusing on this growing space of cultural translation, and the corresponding development of what I would like to call *trans-creative cosmopolitanism* – it is translational and creative both at the same time. Rather than the production of a merely or any “faithful” translated version, trans-creative practices aims to achieve an active articulation of heterogeneous elements, and lead to a creative production of a new product called “New Culture.” Even when its advocates argued for so-called “complete” or “wholesale” westernization, this always involved a mixture and reworking of heterogeneous cultural elements.

Translation as “transcreation” and “transfusion of blood” are one of the many neologisms coined by Brazilian vanguardist poet and translator Haroldo de Campos that put emphasis on the active creation and textual revitalization on the part of the translator.⁶ Contemporary Indian English writers also widely use the term “transcreation” to highlight the symbiotic intermingling of the original and the

⁶ See Vieira, Else Ribeiro Pires. 1999. “Liberating Calibans: Reading of Antropofagia and Haroldo de Campos’ Postics of Transcreation” in Bassnett, Susan and Harish Trivedi. Eds. 1999. *Post-colonial Translation: Theory and Practice*. London and New York: Routledge.

translation.⁷ But there is a major difference between Campos' and Indian transcreation – the former was working as a translator from European languages to Brazilian Portuguese, while the latter is often about the translation from various Indian scripts to English, the master's language, and the creation of Indian English. In the case of Chinese, it is about cultural translation from European into Chinese as/or Chinese translation of European culture. Here I prefer to use “trans-creation” with a hyphen to emphasize the dual sense invoked in the case of Chinese “New Culture” – on the one hand, it involves translation of the Other (West) and creation of a new Self (China); on the other hand, it involves a creation across cultural boundaries between China and the West, a trans-cultural creation, a trans-creation, which often requires a industrious undertaking of negotiation and reconfiguration of these boundaries.

It can be said that, in early modern China, the horizon of cosmopolitanism was constituted through the trans-cultural and trans-lingual practices. It is not a simple “cultural transplantation” as we often hear in Chinese, 文化移植 *Wen Hua Yi Zhi*, the theme of cultural “transplant”, which presupposes the notion of a *given* “organ” (or institutions, laws, customs, writing systems), might not be able to grasp the molecular movement of transformation and translation involved in the process of “transplantation” itself. The cultural “organ”, as *technology* of bringing forth new things, is never given. Rather this process of cultural appropriation is closer to the horticultural method called “promoting root formation” (grafting, or stem cuttings) 插枝 *Cha-Zhi* or 嫁接 *Jia-Jie*,

⁷ See Bassnett, Susan and Harish Trivedi. 1999. “Introduction: Of colonies, cannibals and vernaculars” to *Post-colonial Translation: Theory and Practice*. London and New York: Routledge.

stems cut from mother plants and attached to the host plants. In the first chapter of the *Origin of Species*, Charles Darwin points out that certain productions of variability are extremely rare under nature, but quite common under cultivation. For example what he called “sporting plants”, meaning a single bud or offset which suddenly assumes a new and sometimes very different character from the rest of the plant, are extremely rare under nature, but far from rare under cultivation. Such buds are often propagated by grafting.⁸ Genetic engineering by grafting is one of the most effective ways of producing new varieties in gardening. The trans-creative practices which construct the horizon of cultural cosmopolitanism in modern China can be conceived as a method of “promoting root formation” (grafting) rather than “cultural transplantation” because it involves the similar mixing of heterogeneous genetic elements and production of variability than simply “trans-plantation” of something given. This point will become clear after following discussion.

According to contemporary writer and scholar Shi Zhi-Cun, during the period between 1890 to 1919 there was an enormous wave of translation in Chinese history. It was the second time in Chinese history of three thousand years. The first time was the translation of Buddhist classics from Sanskrit and other Indian scripts in Tong dynasty around the seventh century.⁹ Both waves of translation transformed the horizon of

⁸ Darwin. 1895. *The Origin of Species*.
<http://www.talkorigins.org/faqs/origin/chapter1.html>.

⁹ Shi, Zhi-Cun. 施蛰存. 1990. Ed. *Chinese Modern Literature: Translated Literature*. Shang-Hai Books. 《中國近代文學大繫·翻譯文學集》。上海書店。

Chinese language. Take the term 世界 *Shi-Jie* as in the Chinese translation of “cosmopolitanism” 世界主義 *Shi-Jie-Zhu-Yi*. Now we think of the “world” immediately when we hear 世界 *Shi-Jie*, but before the early twentieth century it was 天下 *Tian Xia*” (Under Heaven) that was closer to the term “world” while 世界 *Shi-Jie* referred to a Buddhist *baroque* notion of universe, which was introduced and created through the translation of Buddhist scripts. According to many Buddhist scripts, a system of sun and moon is a small *Shi-Jie*, one thousand small *Shi-Jie* make up a *Xiao Qian Shi-Jie* [Small Thousand World], and one thousand Small Thousand World made up a *Zhong Qian Shi-Jie* [Middle Thousand World], and finally one thousand Middle Thousand World made up a *Da Qian Shi-Jie* [Great Thousand World]. *Da-Qian-Shi-Jie* is a term that most Chinese speakers are familiar with. It is a common saying, “We live in a Great Thousand World.” This baroque notion of universe has built into Chinese language and thought with the notions of “this life” and “after life”, and territories of transmigration. In *Leng Yan Jing* 楞嚴經 [*Leng Yan Script*], Buddha says

What is called *Zhong-Sheng-Shi-Jie* [the “world of all lives”]? *Shi* is the river of change, and *Jie* is location. You must know, East, West, South, North, Eastern South, Western South, Eastern North, Western North, up and down are *Jie*; past, present and future are *Shi*.

云何名爲眾生世界？世爲遷流，界爲方位。汝今當知，東、西、南、北、東南、西南、東北、西北、上、下爲界；過去、現在、未來爲世。

In Chinese, this life is called 此世 *Ci Shi* [this *Shi*] and next life 來世 *Lai Shi*,

[coming *Shi*.] Heaven is called 天界 and human world 人界. Expressions like these appeared with the first big wave of translation in Chinese history and became integral to Chinese Buddhist and folk religions and every day speaking. In modern Chinese, all these terms are still valid, only that the term *Shi-Jie* require a new meaning that refers to the “world” as in the whole wide world on earth. This new meaning became the more predominant usage of the term *Shi-Jie* since the early twentieth century.

Notably, it is through Japanese *Kanji* (Chinese character) translation of the “world” into *Shi-Jie* that it acquired this new meaning. Since the second big wave of Chinese translation of foreign texts in the early twentieth century, Japan has played a role of transmitter of western thought for China. Many translations of western nouns were directly taken from Japanese *Kanji* translation. After the success of Japan’s Meiji Restoration (1868-1912), and its victory over China in *Jia-Wu* War (1894-1895), Japan became the new model of modernization and westernization for Chinese intellectuals. From 1896 to 1937, approximately 61,000 Chinese students went to Japan to study. Among these students are famous scholars, writers and translators like Lu Xun. But many less known translators made up a new wave of translation of Japanese books which themselves were often translated European works. According to an estimate in 1945, during that time more than 2600 items were translated from Japanese into Chinese.¹⁰ The translation from Japanese is much easier than from European languages because Japanese works use a lot of *Kanji* or *Han Zi* (Chinese characters). It is not

¹⁰ Wang, Fan-Sen. 王汎森. 2002. “The Source of Thought around the Wu-Xu Period: the Case of Japan” in *21 Century* 2002/9. <戊戌前後思想資源的變化：以日本因素為例> 《二十一世紀評論》二〇〇二年九月號。

exaggerating to say that it was through Japanese intellectuals' selection and interpretation of western thought that most Chinese students constituted their notion of the "world." Meanwhile, in the early twentieth century, Japanese *Kanji* translation often formed a competitive relationship with Chinese indigenous translation of western thought – an issue that concerns the formation of modern Chinese language and that we must return later.

Among pioneer indigenous translators in early modern China, Lin Shu (1852-1924) and Yan Fu (1853-1921) were the most influential. Classical Chinese writer Lin Shu, who did not know any foreign languages, translated about 180 works of European literature in collaboration with friends who knew European languages. The genre of "translated literature" was born with Lin Shu. As Qian Zhong-Shu asserts, the translation of Lin Shu worked as a "medium" in the birth of modern Chinese literature.¹¹ On the other hand, Yan Fu, who had studied in Europe, translated eight major works of social sciences and philosophy. Lin and Yan embodied two types of translator, but both translated European works into elegant classic Chinese. Their translations opened the New Culture generation to the (western) world. They introduced Chinese young minds to European sensibility and rationality. As Yan Fu said, Lin Shu's translation of *La Dame aux Camélias* broke every Chinese young man's heart. And after Yan Fu's translation of *Evolution and Ethics*, many young intellectuals, including the leader of New Culture movement Hu Shi, renamed themselves 適 *Shi* – the

¹¹ Qian Zhongshu. 錢鍾書. 1981. *Lin Shu's Translation* Beijing: Shang-Wu. 《林紓的翻譯》。北京：商務。

“fittest” as in “Survival of the fittest.” As Hu Shi recalled, Yan’s translation of *Evolution and Ethics* swept the whole China immediately, and became formal education material for high school students. The New Culture generation continued to rely on translation for articulation of their cultural project. According to Lin Li-Wei’s study, in all of the articles published in *New Youth*, the major journal of New Culture movement, the percentage of translated work is 24%, more than half of which is literature. In the fourth volume (from 1918 January to June when the New Literature movement was the main goal of the journal), 89% of translated work is literature. In the eighth volume (from 1920 September to 1921 April when *New Youth* was becoming the base for Chinese Communists), more than half of the published articles are translated work, and of which only 23% is literature, and 73% is political and social.¹² This heavy reliance on the translation of European literature and political and social theories for articulation of reformative projects or “Revolution”, as intellectuals of New Culture generation called them, was by no means particular to *New Youth*. Rather it was a general rule for early modern Chinese publication.

In the process of cultural translation, where political, social and cultural ideals were introduced into Chinese, the ideal of cosmopolitanism seemed to always remain at the center of the discursive formation. Even more than cosmopolitanism in today’s postcolonial/neocolonial world, China’s participation in the global trend of

¹² Lin Li-Wei. 林立偉. 1999. “From Literature Revolution to Political Revolution” in *21 Century Review* (56). <從文學革命到政治革命 — 《新青年》翻譯的價值趨向> 《二十一世紀評論》一九九九年十二月號・第五十六期。

cosmopolitanism a century ago showed an intense oscillation between the cultural ideal of cosmopolitanism and the political necessity of nationalism. The Chinese New Culture movement in the late 1910's embodied a huge wave of cultural cosmopolitanism in Chinese and human history. "Culture" was seen as *the* field of recreation and language *the* object of artificial evolution, both of which promised a future of new nation that was capable of evolving with the World History. This radical *cultural* cosmopolitanism with its reckless attack on Chinese tradition worried nationalists who were concerned with the survival of China as an emerging modern nation. Most Chinese nationalists, however, did not reject the notion of cosmopolitanism itself as an ideal proposing world peace. Rather they referred it back to the Confucian cosmopolitan ideal of "Great Unity" 大同 *Da Tong* [literally the Great Same-ness]. Kang You-Wei's (1858-1927) *The Book of Great Unity* [*Da Tong Shu* 大同書] published in 1913 was the most famous example. [Please see my discussion of Kang's strategy of universalism in the chapter 2.]

Liang Qi-Chao, a student of Kang and the predecessor of New Culture generation, who fled to Japan after the failed attempt of political reform in 1898 said on his journey to Hawaii, he had no choice but to become a man of the world, that is a cosmopolitan, 世界人 *Shi-Jie-Ren*.

I was a man of the village. I traveled to other villages at the age of nine, to other provinces at seventeen. I had no ambition and was ignorant of the world. *Before I knew it I was jolted, stuck and dictated by the great trends of the nineteenth century world*, and had no choice but become a man of the nation, and a man of the world [a

cosmopolitan]. ¹³ [italics added]

By the “great trends of the nineteenth century *world*”, Liang of course meant the western trends that swept the whole globe through the universalizing act of western imperialism and non-western intellectuals’ aspiration to cosmopolitanism. In Chinese, there is a common idiom since then, 西風東漸 *Xi Feng Dong Jian* “the west wind blows to the east.” The notion of “new laws” serves as a pertinent example -- “The so-called new law is not inherent to the West, but is reformed by the West people. It makes no difference that it is reformed and applied to the West or to the East.”¹⁴ At the same time, however, Liang was also a great nationalist, the prophet of “Great New China.” As a noted scholar of Mo Zi (476-390 BC), the ancient anti-war cosmopolitan philosopher, Liang was challenged as to whether he had turned away from his cosmopolitan belief by advocating nationalism. In response, Liang made cosmopolitanism and nationalism objects of different existential levels.

Cosmopolitanism is anti-war. Nationalism is militant.

Cosmopolitanism is ideality. Nationalism is reality. Cosmopolitanism is future. Nationalism is now. Now China is on the edge of demise. It is not the best time to talk about future and ideal.¹⁵

For Liang, cosmopolitanism is the future of nationalism. That is to say, nationalism is a

¹³ Liang, Qi-Chao. 1960 [1899]. “A Journey to Hawaii” in *Liang Qi-Chao Collection*. (*Yin Bing Shi Wen Ji*) Vol. 5. <汗漫錄> (夏威夷遊記), 收錄於《飲冰室文集》第五冊。台灣中華書局印行。

¹⁴ Liang, Qi-Chao. 1960 [1899]. P. 6.

¹⁵ Liang, Qi-Chao. 梁啟超. 1899. “In Response to a Question.” <答客難>.

necessary stage toward cosmopolitanism. In the same vein, Sun Yi-Xian (Sun Yet-Sen), the “father of Republic of China”, employed the metaphor of a lottery to describe the unrealistic nature of cosmopolitanism. When explaining why China “lost” its nationalism, Sun told a story about a coolie (laborer) who carried travelers’ luggage to earn his living. One day he finally made enough money to buy a lottery ticket dreaming he would become a rich man. He hid the ticket inside the bamboo lever, his only valuable thing, that he used to carry the travelers’ luggage. When he learned that he had won the lottery, however, tragedy happened: overwhelmed by the excitement the coolie threw away the bamboo, along with the ticket to the future inside it, because he thought he would never have to work again. China was that coolie who threw away the only means of subsistence (nationalism) for the false promise of cosmopolitanism when the latter’s realization can only rely on the former. Furthermore, under the circumstances cosmopolitanism was “imperialism in disguise” and “invasion in disguise.”¹⁶ Like Kang and Liang, however, Sun invoked his own ideal of future cosmopolitanism based on the Confucian ideal of “Great Unity” 大同 *Da Tong*. Sun’s famous phrase “Under Heaven is the public. The world is Great Unity” [天下爲公 世界大同 *Tian Xia Wei Gong. Shi Jie Da Tong*] is itself already a combination of West and East, tradition and modern. “天下 *Tian Xia*” (Under Heaven) is a traditional Chinese term for the “world” and “世界 *Shi Jie*” is the modern Japanese/Chinese translation for the “world.” This

<http://www.millionbook.net/mj/l/liangqichao/>.

¹⁶ Sun Yi-Xian (Sun Yet-Sen). 1924. “Nationalism” in *San Min Zhu Yi*. <民族主義第三講>, 《三民主義》. <http://www2.seeder.net.tw/sun0620/nationalism03.htm>.

combination shows that *cultural translation* plays a central role in the modern formation of cosmopolitanism, especially for non-western countries. In China's case, it involves a reconfiguration of Chinese terms. And as I mentioned above, it is imperative to note that this reconfiguration often works through Japan. Since Japan belongs to the *Han Zi* (Chinese character) (Japanese called *Kanji*) cultural circle, many modern Japanese translators of western thought used Chinese characters to translate modern European words. These *Kanji* terms often circulated back to China through those Chinese intellectuals who has studied in or were exiled to Japan, like Liang and Sun, and competed with and usually replaced the original Chinese translation terms. I will further discuss this point in next chapter. Now it suffices to say early modern Chinese versions of cosmopolitanism, just like its translational practices, was a hybrid creature that blended heterogeneous cultural and historical elements together. Chinese intellectuals did not and could not possibly just adopt European notion of cosmopolitanism. They often translated it into Chinese ancient doctrines such as Great Unity or Mo Zi's anti-war cosmopolitanism.

Nevertheless, for New Culture generation the ideal of cosmopolitanism was necessarily a project of radical westernization. It is against this background, Sun specifically mentioned that those Chinese "new youth" that advocated "New Culture" and embraced cosmopolitanism were fooled by the western imperialism. To be fair, these "new youth" were by no mean unaware of the fact of imperialism and invasion. Rather they invoked a different notion of nationalism based on individualism and cosmopolitanism. Chen Du-Xiu (1879-1942), the founder of *New Youth* (1915-),

correctly pointed out the foreignness of “nationalism” in an essay called “Should We Be Patriotic?” appeared on *Weekly Review*.

Chinese nation has been isolated, and dominated the East since the ancient time. Before signing commercial pacts with European countries, America, and Japan, we did not know the notion of nation; we only knew *Tian Xia* [Under Heaven]. There is little patriotism in the root of our nationality. ... Europe has been comprised of many nations since ancient time. Their sense of nation is profound. Patriotism has become their permanent nationality. Recently there are some great minds who believe in either individualism or cosmopolitanism debunk the fact that nations are *artificial, not natural and worthless*, and that various dark vices in domestic and foreign affairs have been done in the name of nation. ... China now is a poor and weak nation oppressed by others. ... “Patriotism” is often used as a tool for exploitation and oppression of individuals. ... But China is in no position to oppress other nations now.¹⁷ [italics added]

Chen’s conclusion was therefore China at that particular historical moment needed patriotism to fight against unjust invasion, but it should never be abused as a tool to oppress its people. For Chen the notion of nationalism must be situated. Unlike cosmopolitanism and individualism that were believed to be more natural and truer, nationalism was situated in the history of European nation-states and the emergence of

¹⁷ Chen, Du-Xiu. 陳獨秀. 1919. “Should We Be Patriotic?” in *Weekly Review* 25 <我

non-European new nations. Indeed, for Chen and other young intellectuals of New Culture, between the “individual” and the “world” any intermediary groups were at best suspicious and at worst oppressive. Therefore Fu Si-Nian, editor-in-chief of *Renaissance*, another major journal of New Culture movement, once declared,

I only admit the human race on the big level and “I” on the small level as real. Any classes between “I” and the human race, such as family, locality and nation are all idols. We must cultivate a “real I” for the sake of the human race.¹⁸

This version of *cosmopolitanism-via-individualism* was in opposition to Liang’s and Sun’s *cosmopolitanism-via-nationalism*. As such, Nationalism was merely a necessity for survival. However it did not mean nationalism was a trivial issue. Chen distinguished between Chinese people’s ignorance of nationalism and European *great minds*’ reflexive disbelief in nationalism. Chinese people were in lack of nationalism because they did not have education, knowledge and solidarity, that they did not know they needed nationalism to survive in the age of imperialism. On the contrary, some European thinkers were against nationalism because they recognized the fact that it was used as an oppressive tool to invade other countries. As a matter of fact, for Chen as well as many others, like Yan Fu who translated Spencer’s *The Study of Sociology* to Chinese as 群學肄言 *Qun Xue Si Yan* (On The Study of Group), the Chinese lack of the notion of groups, 群 *Qun*, was one major factor in its decline. Chen pointed out

究竟應當不應當愛國 > 《每周評論》第二十五號。

¹⁸ Fu Si-Nan. 傅斯年. 1911. “The Past and the Future of *Renaissance*” in *Renaissance*

that this lack was due to Chinese traditional familism rather than the new trend of individualism.¹⁹ Real groups (*Qun*) are constituted by real individuals. The critique of family was a central theme of New Culture movement because the strong family tie among many other things embodied Chinese backwardness. What Fu Si-Nan calls “real I” was the real goal of the “new youth.” For them, nationalism must base on individualism.

In an essay called “To the Youth” which appeared in the very first issue of *New Youth*, Chen proposed six principles for the Chinese new youth to enhance their “self-consciousness” 自覺 *Zi-Jue* (in Chinese, it also means to be awake, to come to realize), and to create a new better Chinese society and nation. According to Chen, Chinese new youth should learn to be

(1) *Autonomous and not slavish*. ... German philosopher Nietzsche distinguishes two kinds of morality: those who are autonomous in heart and brave pursue Morality of Noble, and those who are humble and obedient follow Morality of Slave. ... (2) *Progressive and not conservative*. ... According to the fundamental law of universe, everything is evolving. It is banal to say the otherwise. That is why French contemporary philosopher H Bergson’s *Creative Evolution* swept the world. ... (3) *Aspiring and not withdrawing*. ... (4) *Cosmopolitan and not isolationist*. ... (5) *Utilitarian and not*

2(1). <新潮之回顧與前瞻> 《新潮》二卷一號。.

¹⁹ Chen, Du-Xiu. 陳獨秀. 1920. “What Is the New Culture Movement?” in *Youth* 7(5)

unpractical. Ever since J. S. Mill's "Utilitarianism" in Britain and Comte's "positivist philosophy" in France, the European social and thought underwent rapid changes. ... (6) *Scientific and not imaginative*.²⁰

In this short letter to Chinese young people, Chen mentioned Nietzsche's morality of noble, Bergson's creative evolution, J. S. Mill's utilitarianism, and Comte's positivism and so on. For Chen, these western figures put together presented a modern worldview – autonomous, progressive, aspiring, cosmopolitan, utilitarian, and scientific.²¹

Also it should be noted that Chen employed the discursive strategy of dualism to bring forth this picture of new cosmopolitanism worldview. Indeed, during the encounter with western cultural and politico-economic powers, the binary opposition between West and East was created, and the notions of Western Culture, Eastern Culture, "Western Nation" and Eastern "Nation" were coined to prepare the forthcoming long debate concerning the nature of these two cultural systems. In 1915, Chen already talked about the "Fundamental Difference between Eastern and Western

<什麼是新文化運動?>《新青年》第七卷第五號。

²⁰ Chen, Du-Xiu. 陳獨秀. 1915. "To the Youth" in *Youth* 1(1) <敬告青年>《青年》創刊號。

²¹ Later in 1923, *New Youth* led by Chen would advocate a form of "cosmopolitanism of social sciences", in which social sciences were said to transcend the national boundaries, and the notion of "national essence" was just a historical illusion. This new version of cosmopolitanism then would lead to a communist revolution. See *New Youth*. 新青年. 1923. "New Declaration of New Youth" in *New Youth Quarterly* (1). <新青年之新宣言>《新青年季刊》第一期。Pp. 1-6.

Nations”

(1). Western nation is based on war, and Eastern nation on rest. ... (2).

Western nation is based on the individual, and Eastern nation on family. ... (3) Western nation is based on law and utility, and Eastern nation on sentiment and hypocrisy.²²

Binary oppositions like these dominated the discussion about national culture for decades. As Liang Qi-Chao pointed out, the wholistic notion of societal culture was almost the common sense in the intellectual circle during the 1910's and 1920's when people were disappointed with the outcome of political revolution.²³ And as I would like to emphasize, this wholistic notion of culture often invoked a presupposed *incommensurability* of aforementioned binary cultural oppositions. Such was the background of the project of “complete westernization” of the New Culture movement. The disappearance of “Chinese culture” as the foundation of cultural re-creation led to the famous “Cultural Construction based on the Chinese Standard” 中國本位的文化建設 *Zhong Quo Ben Wei De Wen Hua Jian She*, published by ten professors in 1935 and instigated a heated debate about the (in)commensurability between Western and Chinese cultures. It is not surprising the debate ended with Hu Shi's consent to the argument that “complete westernization” or “wholesale westernization” was not feasible

²² Chen, Du-Xiu. 陳獨秀. 1915. “Fundamental Differences between Eastern and Western Nations” in *Youth* 1(4) <東西民族根本思想之差異> 《青年》第一卷第四號。

²³ Liang, Qi-Chao. 梁啟超. 1923 “The Evolution of China in the Past Fifty Years” <五十年中國進化概論>。

or possible, and that the slogan of westernization had better change to *cosmopolitanization* 世界化 *Shi-Jie-Hua* – literally *to become the world*.²⁴ It is only in the name of the “world”, westernization becomes acceptable to most modern Chinese intellectuals. I will deal with the debate in section 4.

3. *Historical Situationality of Linguistic Cosmopolitanism*

For most young intellectuals involved in the New Culture Movement, China itself is to blame at least partly for its being an object of western imperialism. The wholistic notion of culture and the corresponding presupposed incommensurability between Western and Chinese cultures were used to indicate the total weakness of Chinese political, economic, familial, and ethical arrangements. In this total critique of Chinese culture, Chinese written language was targeted as the core of problems. During 1917-19, there were a series of discussions in *New Youth* about the nature of Chinese written language, the argument of abolishing Chinese characters and the possibility of adopting Esperanto or other European languages. The lifelong language reformer Wu Jieng-Heng once suggested the adoption of Esperanto, translated into Japanese/Chinese as “the language of the world” 世界語 *Shi-Jie-Yu*, as the technology [*Qi*] for the Chinese to “catch up in the line of evolution.” (Please see my discussion in chapter2). Fu Si-Nan

²⁴ Hu Shi. 胡適. 1935. “Fully Cosmopolitanization and Wholesale Westernization” in Ma, Fang-Ruo. (ed.) 1980 [1935]. *Collection of Discussion about Cultural Construction and Westernization*. 2 Vols. Taipei: Pamirs. <充分世界化與全盤西化>, 馬方若編, 《文化建設與西化問題討論集》。台北：帕米爾書局。

said Chinese characters are the “most inconvenient tool in the world.”²⁵ In 1923, *National Language Monthly* published a special issue on language reform, “Han Zi Revolution”(漢字革命號 *Han Zi Ge Ming Hao*). Besides, the century-long Romanization movement as I discussed in chapter 3 also started from a radical critique of Chinese characters. Along with the “Western culture” taken as the model of cultural re-creation, the European model of alphabetic writing was believed to be the most advanced and evolved form of writing, and the desirable future of Chinese writing.

Along the developmental line of Chinese characters, they moved from hieroglyphs to ideograms, and from ideograms to phonograms. There is only one step away from borrowed phonograms to alphabetic writing. ... We only need to *push a little further* before we can have our own alphabetic writing. Therefore I claim: in light of the evolution of Chinese characters, it is absolutely possible that we enact a *Han Zi Revolution* and switch to alphabetic language.²⁶ [italics added]

This assertion is *wrong*, as I have proved in the previous two chapters. Chinese figurative-phonetic writing and European alphabetic writing are two different systems with their own lines of evolution. Here I want to reassess this kind of assertions from another perspective. I call this “linguistic cosmopolitanism”, which simultaneously marked a discontinuity with Chinese tradition and showed a continuity with Chinese

²⁵ Fu Si-Nan. 傅斯年. 1911. “On Adopting Alphabetic Writing for Chinese Language” in *Renaissance* 1(3). <漢語改用拼音文字的初步談>《新潮》一卷三號。P. 392.

²⁶ Qian, Xuan-Tong. 錢玄同. 1923. “Han Zi Revolution” in *National Language Monthly* 1(7). <漢字革命號>《國語月刊》1卷7期, 1923年1月12日。

orthodox view of unified written language.

In Chinese history, the ideal of standardized written language 書同文 *Shu-Tong-Wen* (literally means “writing in the same script”) was first achieved in BC 220 of Qin dynasty. When the First Emperor (of Qin) conquered the six states of the previous Warring State period, he also eliminated their scripts whose structure was different from the written forms in Qin script. This was of course already an imperialist move. In orthodox historiography, the First Emperor’s unification of script is usually seen as a *positive* force for the development of Chinese empire and a unified culture. Nevertheless, it also resulted in the destruction of pre-Qin culture. Some have argued that the simplification of Chinese characters 簡化字 *Jian Hua Zhi*, the destruction of traditional characters and the cultural gap it resulted resembles the First Emperor’s unification of script. However, I want to emphasize another aspect of this resemblance in which linguistic cosmopolitanism is linked to the formation of political and cultural hegemony across national boundaries. *Imperialism and cosmopolitanism is therefore often the two sides of the same coin in terms of their effects on cultural and linguistic diversity.*

As I mentioned earlier since 1000’s onwards there formed a *Han Zi* (漢字 Chinese character) Cultural Circle, including Vietnam, Korea and Japan. But its formation started as early as in Han dynasty. In BC 111 Han Wu Emperor’s military took over today’s Vietnam as part of his empire. From BC 111 to AD 939 Vietnam remained part of China. Likewise, Korea was incorporated into China’s territory in BC 108 and remained so until the fourth century. They often remained subordinate countries to

China when they were not part of it. Although Japan had never been part of China's territory, it took China as object of emulation in Han dynasty and later especially in Tong dynasty of the seventh and eighth centuries. These countries that were directly or indirectly under Chinese empire's government also borrow Chinese characters and adopt Confucian thought and Chinese educational system and so on. In borrowing Chinese characters they also created their own writing systems based on Chinese system. For example, Vietnamese *Chu-Nom*, Korean *Hangul* and Japanese *Kana* are all such *Han Zi* based systems. Meanwhile in these countries Chinese characters remained commonly used for official and literal scripts until very recently. The *Han Zi* Cultural Circle is often called "East Asian Culture Circle" (東亞文化圈) because when the other countries adopted Chinese characters they also adopted Chinese Confucian thought and institutions. The hegemony of Chinese characters and culture in the *Han Zi* Cultural Circle only started to break down when European imperialism arrived at East Asia. For instance, Romanization started around the seventeenth century with missionaries in Vietnam. French colonial government also promoted Romanization. In 1945, Vietnam became an independent nation and made Romanization the official policy. Likewise North Korea abolished *Han Zi* in 1949; South Korea in 1970. The same process of *de-Sinization* happened in Japan. As early as in 1866, Japanese intellectuals already argued for abolishment of *Kanji* (Chinese characters) and for the total use of *Kana*, Japanese system of alphabetic, and Romanization. The use of *Kanji* was not abolished, but considerably restricted.

Therefore, de-Sinization and Romanization were two interrelated processes in modern East Asia. They embodied the breaking down of the millennial hegemony of

Chinese writing system and the corresponding rising hegemony of European alphabetic writing. The reckless critique of Chinese language and radical linguistic cosmopolitanism of the New Culture movement were to be understood in this particular historical situation of East Asia with China as the old center. It was a process of *de-centering and re-centering of the world*, a re-ordering of cultural territories for the Chinese New Culture generation as well as their contemporaries in other East Asian countries in the *Han Zi* Culture Circle. In this radical change, one thing remained unchanged – the ideal of linguistic cosmopolitanism/imperialism. Only that the center and standard of this ideal shifted from China to Europe.

4. Cultural Construction as Westernization and/or Cosmopolitanization:: the Molecular Translational Effects of Becoming the World

The notion of culture/language as an arena of re-creation is linked to cultural/linguistic cosmopolitanism which often implies a re-configuration of various different cultures according to a standard, even when it is a vague notion of universality or something yet to come. The real problem therefore is about “standard.” For many non-western countries, this standard is often what they call “westernization.” That was the case of Chinese New Culture movement in 1910’s and 1920’s. As I discussed in the second chapter, it took only a half century for the standard of Chinese reform to shift from “Chinese learning as substance, Western learning as function” to “Chinese foundation and western supplement”, and to complete westernization – for *New Youth*, it meant democracy and science. As its establisher Chen Du-Xiu said, *New Youth* had been accused of destroying Confucianism, rituals, national essence, chastity, old ethics

(loyalty and obedience), old arts (Chinese drama), old religion (ghosts), old literature and old politics (rule by the few). And Chen said they accept this accusation graciously and happily but had to say they only did it for the realization of democracy and science in China.²⁷ The movement as a project of societal reform was considered as a failure because those “old” things refused to go away. However, the spirit of westernization also refused to dissipate. The struggle between these contradictory forces continued and still continues. In 1934, Chinese first generation sociologist Chen Xu-Jing published his famous piece “For Complete Westernization” 全盤西化 *Quan Pan Xi Hua*, literally means “the whole ‘plate’ of westernization.” Chen Xu-Jing argued culture is a wholist and inseparable system. Notably, this argument involves a *metaphor of food* in which “western culture” as a whole is like a delicious meal put in a plate. Western culture is not only delicious, it is nutritious and therapeutic. Complete westernization means to take everything on the plate. That is the only way to do it. This point of view reminds me of food therapy in Chinese traditional medicine.

On the other hand, it was against this wholist spirit of westernization that in 1935 ten professors published “Cultural Construction based on Chinese Standard.”

In the field of culture, we can no longer see the present China. ...

China has disappeared in the field of culture. The configurations of Chinese politics, social organizations, and its contents and forms of thought, have all lost their characteristics. People who are nurtured in

²⁷ Chen, Du-Xiu. 陳獨秀. 1919. “A Defence of *New Youth*” in *New Youth* 6(1) <《新青年》罪案之答辯書>《新青年》第六卷第一號。

these faceless politics, society and thought are less and less Chinese. They can hardly call themselves Chinese. Therefore we can say for sure, looking at the modern world through the field of culture, *there is no China, and there are hardly any Chinese people in China.*²⁸ [italics added]

These heavy and grievous opening statements made a strong impression and instigated a heated debate concerning “the problem of westernization” 西化問題 *Xi-Hua-Wen-Ti* in the whole Chinese intellectual circle. The ten professors called for a project of cultural construction based on the Chinese “standard” 中國本位 *Zhong Quo Ben Wei* [literally, Chinese Self-Position]. The Chinese term *Ben-Wei* is also used to translate the word “standard” as in financial terms like Gold Standard and Silver Standard. It consists in two characters literally meaning Self(*Bei*)-Position(*Wei*), and inevitably invokes a self-centered connotations beside “standard” which its critics (radical westernizers) set their mind to fight against. The ten professors’ definition of “Chinese standard” was “what China needs here and now” which they suggested that we could figure out via “scientific methods.” Notably, *they were by no means against westernization itself as a necessary step for “cultural (re)construction.”* What they suggested was that we had to be selective, not only of western culture but also of Chinese culture – to choose what are “good” and delete what are “bad.” Or to use the aforementioned metaphor of food, we

²⁸ Wang Xin-Min etc. 王新命等. 1935. “Cultural Construction based on Chinese Standard” in Ma, Fang-Ruo. 馬方若 (ed.) 1980 [1935]. *Collection of Discussion about Cultural Construction and Westernization*. 2 Vols. Taipei: Pa-Mi-er. <中國本位的文化建設宣言>《文化建設與西化問題討論集》。台北：帕米爾書局。

should be able to eat from different plates at the same time as long as we select what is good. They were not against evolutionism and cosmopolitanism either. Indeed they said we had to “create in order to catch up with” the west, and thereby contribute to “culture of the world.” They emphasized that

To construct China in the field of culture is not to abandon the ideal of *Da Tong* (Great Unity). It is to construct China as a *healthy* unit that is powerful enough to contribute to the goal of cosmopolitanism (*Da Tong* of the world).²⁹ [italics added]

Therefore, their position can be summarized as follows: westernization must be based on a Chinese standard that meets Chinese needs here and now, so that it can construct a new and “healthy” China in the field of world culture which is on its road to cosmopolitanism.

Their position was forcefully critiqued by radical westernizers. Among these critiques, the most revealing was the accusation that “Cultural Construction based on Chinese Standard” was merely a new formulation of “Chinese learning as substance. Western learning as function” which had become the stigmatized icon for cultural conservatism since the Foreign Affair Movement from 1860’s to 1890’s. Even though the ten professors explicitly and constantly distinguished their position from Chinese substance and western function,³⁰ they were haunted by the accusation. One of the

²⁹ Wang Xin-Min etc. 王新命等. 1935.

³⁰ He, Bing-Song. 何炳松. 1935. “‘Cultural Construction based on Chinese Standard’ in Response to Mr. Hu Shi” in *Collection of Discussion about Cultural Construction and Westernization*. <答胡適先生中國本位的文化建設> 《文化建設與西化問

leaders of New Culture movement Hu Shi said,

It is astonishing that the ten professors said they were not satisfied with “Chinese learning as substance, Western learning as function” of the Foreign Affairs period. Their “Cultural Construction based on Chinese Standard” is exactly a formula of “Chinese substance and Western function” in disguise ... In my opinion, the inertia of Chinese culture is horrendous. Therefore we don’t have to worry about “Chinese Self-Position.” People like us who are willing to look forward should accept without reservation the *world culture* of science and technology, along with the spiritual civilization behind it. Let our old culture contact the *world culture* fully and freely. ... The crystallization out of cultural transformation in the future will naturally be a culture based on Chinese Self-Position.³¹ [italics added]

For Hu Shi Chinese Self-Position was not any positive foundation as the ten professors suggested, it was merely a negative residue. However, even this negative view of Chinese Self-Position upset Chen Xu-Jing and other radical westernizers. They questioned Hu Shi if he had join the “clique of compromise” 折衷派 *Zhe Zhong Pai* -- a stigmatized name that radical westernizers often used and still use to call their opponents, and that most modest westernizers refused to take for themselves. Therefore

題討論集》。台北：帕米爾書局。

³¹ Hu Shi. 胡適. 1935. “On the so-called ‘Cultural Construction based on Chinese Standard’” in *Collection of Discussion about Cultural Construction and Westernization*. <試析所謂『中國本位的文化建設』> 《文化建設與西化問題

the ten professors had to say in their summary response that

We are not only against conservatism or blind following, we are also against “Chinese substance and western function.” ... *Speaking of substance and function, they are inseparable*. Different substance has different function. Chinese substance and western function is pure nonsense.³² [italics added]

Here we must distinguish the inseparability of substance and function from the inseparability of societal culture as a whole, while at the same time be aware of their closeness. As I point out in chapter 2, the argument that *Ti* (substance) and *Yong* are inseparable entails the metaphor of a cultural organism. For example, important translator and thinker Yan Fu employed the organic interpretation of *Ti/Yong* distinction and compares cultural [learning] systems to a biological organism – a horse or a cow. “The body of a cow has the use of carrying heavy load. The body of a horse has the use of running a long way. ... Therefore, Chinese learning has its own body and use, and so does the western learning. The body and use must not be separated. Otherwise, both the Chinese learning and the western learning would be dead.”³³ This totalist notion of culture had more or less become a consensus among Chinese progressive intellectuals

討論集》。台北：帕米爾書局。

³² Wang Xin-Min etc. 王新命等. 1935. “Our Summary Response” in *Collection of Discussion about Cultural Construction and Westernization*. <我們的總答覆> 《文化建設與西化問題討論集》。台北：帕米爾書局。

³³ Quoted in Sun, Quang-De. 孫廣德. 1985. *The Late Qing Tradition and the Debate about Westernization*. Taipei: Shang-Wu Press. 《晚清傳統與西化的爭論》，台灣商務印書局發行。P, 168.

after the failure of Foreign Affair Movement, as Liang Qi-Chao pointed out. The ten professors seemed to contradict themselves by saying they agreed with the inseparability of *Ti/Yong* but not with the assertion that westernization could only be achieved as a wholesale project since the latter assertion was exactly based on the thesis of cultural inseparability.

However, as I pointed out in chapter 2, the *Ti/Yong* relation is based on the more fundamental *Dao/Qi* distinction which in turn is far more complex than either dualism or wholism can explain. The distinction between *Dao* and *Qi* involves a *virtual space of evolution*, which comprises a constant heterogeneous evolution that traverses across all things, include humans, animals and machines. The development of genetic engineering and bio-technology has proved that transversal evolution is anything but impossible. In terms of biological organism, the transversal communication or coupling between *Ti* and *Yong* which “originally” come from different entities or life forms is no longer absurd as Yan Fu asserted more than a century ago. I suggest the same thing can be said about “cultural entity.” I believe what we witness in the past century or so is already an artificial [but not necessarily fully conscious nor necessarily voluntary] evolution which transverses across heterogeneous cultures. What the ten professors as well as radical westernizers like Chen Xu-Jing and other New Culturalists overlooked was the *molecular* movement that communicates between heterogeneous entities. It is “molecular” because it moves *below* the apparently binary oppositions and thereby communicates *across* the given boundaries between “Western Culture” and “Chinese Culture.” This molecular movement is exactly what the *becoming* of any “New Culture” is about. “Westernization” is not a *leap* from the molar entity “China” or “East” to

another molar entity “West” even though sometimes it does take a Kierkegaardian leap of faith to face the absolute uncertainty in the process of cultural transformation. Westernization, like any other becomings, involves molecular transversality. 西化 *Xi-Hua* means “to become western.” Actually Chinese character 化 *Hua* itself refers to a molecular movement of becoming that communicates between heterogeneous entities, deterritorializes and reterritorializes the boundaries between things, humans and animals. The molecular connotation of 化 *Hua* is also manifest in its another meaning *to dissolve* or *to melt* (the boundaries and reconfigures the new boundaries). The transversality of becoming moves across the boundaries between cultural entities which are defined as heterogeneous.

As I emphasize, this molecular movement of “becoming western”, which has long been overlooked by its both proponents and opponents, manifests itself in the increasing *space of cultural translation*. The necessity of translation as a “tool” of introducing western thought into Chinese mind is well recognized and even overrated. However, the creative-transformative essence of translation and its significance to the project of westernization is mostly left unnoted. The appropriation, negotiation, and transformation that cultural translation relies on constitute the molecular process moving across different languages and cultures. It is these *molecular translational effects* rather than any grand decisions that really contributes to the project artificial evolutional of “becoming western” or “becoming the world.” To recognize these translational effects, it foremost requires an overturn of the molar way of thinking with which Chinese intellectual are too often caught up and led to the essentialist impasse in the discussion of westernization.

Therefore, the differences between the ten professors and radical westernizers were not so much about the opposition between national essence and westernization. The oppositions like this tell us nothing about the nature of cultural becomings. Both the ten professors and radical westernizers agreed that “westernization” was one of the basic principles of modern Cultural Construction. The problem was *how* to do it – do we need a “Chinese Self-Position” to guide the process of westernization? Let’s note this either/or problematic was based on a molar way of thinking that both camps in the debate followed.

Sociologist Chen Xu-Jing was right when he asserted westernization had become more or less a consensus or a shared belief.³⁴ Even the noted cultural conservative and philosopher Liang Shu-Ming (1893-1988) said in 1921 that the only way to face western culture is “complete (whole plate) recognition and acceptance” 全盤承受 *Quan Pan Cheng Shou*.³⁵ Only that the term “westernization” was and is often unbearable for a “Chinese Self.” Either we had to get rid of that Self, as radical westernizers argued, or we had to change the term “westernize” – to *become western* and replaced it with *cosmopolitanization* 世界化 *Shi-Jie-Hua* – literally to *become the*

³⁴ Chen, Xu-Jing. 陳序經. 1935. “Reach a Common Belief through the Discussion about the Problem of Westernization” in *Collection of Discussion about Cultural Construction and Westernization*. Taipei: Pamirs. <從西化問題的討論裡求得一個共同信仰> , 《文化建設與西化問題討論集》。台北：帕米爾書局。

³⁵ Liang Shu Ming. 梁漱溟. 2002 (1921). *East and West Culture and their Philosophies*. Taipei: Shang Wu. 《東西文化及其哲學》。台北：商務印書館。

world, as Hu Shi suggested.³⁶ By replacing *Quan Pan Xi Hua*, literally means the whole “plate” of westernization, complete or wholesale westernization, with *Chong Fen Shi-Jie-Hua* “fully or sufficient cosmopolitanization”, it also did away with the metaphor of plate and food that like Campos’ translation as transfusion of blood invokes a corporeal image of culture -- Culture as food that can be eaten and digested and excreted. The term cosmopolitanization is semantically detached from any specific location and given cultures. It denotes something yet to come. As such, the term *cosmopolitanization* 世界化 *Shi-Jie-Hua* also did away with the anxiety radical westernizers invoke among Chinese intellectual circle. Although it is a version of *cosmopolitanism-via-westernization* that most modern Chinese intellectuals agree with, it has not been able to articulate itself without a resort to the molar dualism between West and East.

Cosmopolitanism is by no means value-neutral. On the one hand, it often works as a discursive transmitter that sets a virtual goal of “cosmopolitan” for the process of cultural translation. Be(com)ing “cosmopolitan” is a virtual goal because it is not something given, stable or tangible, it is both something real and something yet to come. The constantly expanding space of cultural translation around the world indicates the incomplete nature of cosmopolitanism. On the other hand, according to my analysis of the discursive field of the “problem of westernization,” the banner of

³⁶ Hu Shi. 胡適. 1935. “Fully Cosmopolitanization and Wholesale Westernization” in Ma, Fang-Ruo. (ed.) 1980 [1935]. *Collection of Discussion about Cultural Construction and Westernization*. 2 Vols. Taipei: Pamirs. <充分世界化與全盤西化>, 馬方若編, 《文化建設與西化問題討論集》。台北：帕米爾書局。

“cosmopolitanism” as a virtual goal seemed to re-enforce the molar way of thinking it tried to transcend. This failure of “cosmopolitanism” to dissolve the unproductive dualism and wholism is due to the general neglect of molecular transversal communication across heterogeneous cultural entities and the creative-transformative nature of this communication. This communication is what we usually call “cultural translation.” It is imperative to note that the process we have called “westernization” is not a direct or one-way delivery, but always already invokes various molecular processes of *translation*.

No matter whether it is Chen Du-Xiu’s *cosmopolitanism-via-individualism*, Liang Qi-Chao’s and Sun Yet-Sen’s *cosmopolitanism-via-nationalism*, or Hu Shi’s *cosmopolitanism-via-westernization*, cosmopolitanism as a virtual (and real) goal is empty without a radical effort of cultural translation which inevitably leads to a transformation of the Chinese linguistic and cultural horizon.

Chapter 6

Cultural Translation and the Chinese Project of Trans-Creative Linguistic Modernity

The invasion of Europeanized grammar into Chinese Pai-Hua is not out of curiosity, but necessity. (Lu Xun, 1934)

In order to open people's mind, we need schools. Schooling takes a long time. We need associations and speeches. Speeches are not easy to hold. Our last resort is to translate books. (Lin Shu, 1900)

The problem of writing: writers, as Proust says, invent a new language within language, a foreign language, as it were. They bring to light new grammatical or syntactical powers. They force language outside its customary furrows, they make it delirious [délirer]. But the problem of writing is also inseparable from a problem of seeing and hearing: in effect, when another language is created within language, it is language in its entirety that tends toward an "asyntactical," "agrammatical" limit, or that communicates with its own outside. (Gilles Deleuze, 1997 [1993])

1. Two Tasks of the Chinese Translator of Western Thought

As I emphasized in the previous chapter translation is more than a "tool" of communication between different languages and cultures. Nor is it simply about the introduction of foreign (western) thought. Translation as a creative-transformative practice produces *molecular effects* that intervene in the grand effort of westernization,

modernization or cosmopolitanization. These effects are “molecular” because they are produced through a molecular translational movement that moves *below* the apparently binary oppositions and thereby communicates *across* the given boundaries between “Western Culture” and “Chinese Culture.” This intervention is mainly manifest on but not exclusively restricted to the linguistic level, since the issue of language itself is often discursively and existentially inseparable from other aspects of the project of modernity. It is these molecular effects that constitute the process I would like to call *cultural translation*, which has transformed and continues to transform the horizon of modern Chinese language in terms of grammar and terminology. In this process, the fact that Chinese written language has a structural and grammatical configuration radically different from European inflexive type of language has been the center of attention since it was a conscious project that Chinese nation and culture should be westernized, modernized or cosmopolitanized, as we see in the New Culture movement and the discursive field it belonged to. The dominant interpretation of this linguistic difference is the particular argument I examined in chapter 4, that *Chinese language lacks (sufficient) grammar, and therefore is unsuitable for logical and scientific thinking*. This is the argument that not only Chinese literary reformers believed, but also that Westerners have used to criticize and understand Chinese language. As I pointed out, this argument is based on a Eurocentric and Europeanized notion of grammatical equivalence which equates the specific linguistic order “subject-verb-object” with *the* logical order, and which endows particular grammatical devices like inflection in verbs, temporal tense, grammatical functions of the definite article, entification and so on with a cognitive value, and which raises the verb “to be” to ontological status. As such, in the

process of cultural translation that has transformed the horizon of modern Chinese culture and language, *translation of grammar* has played a central role.

Besides its different grammatical configuration, Chinese written language also differs from European language in its basic unit, as we see in the different principles of construction between Chinese character 字 *Zi* and European alphabetical “words” which are composed of letters or morphemes. In chapters 3 and 4 I already discussed the different structure and divergent lines of evolution of these two forms of writing, and how these differences had been misconstrued and simplified to a linear evolutionism which has long informed the project of modernity in the discursive field of Chinese New Culture. Now any Chinese translators of European texts must face these two fundamental differences: syntax and words. The translation of syntax and the translation of words are two separate and yet closely related tasks the translator has to struggle with. And it is through the translational practices related to these two tasks that modern Chinese written language becomes.

This chapter aims to discuss the role cultural translation plays in the trans-creative project of modern Chinese language. Firstly, I want to examine the particular discourse holding that “literal translation” was a method of creating a new Chinese language and the very nature of this translational practice. I will investigate the discourse and debates concerning the opposition between *Zhi-Yi* (straight translation) and *Yi-Yi* (interpretive translation) in the discursive field of Chinese New Cultural Movement. My purpose is not to decide which method is better or “right.” Rather I aim to evaluate the *discursive connection* between the “straight translation of the (European) syntax” and the trans-

creative project of Chinese language as a new literary medium. Then in order to elaborate the molecular nature of linguistic trans-creation, which Chinese New Culturalists generally overlooked, I will discuss Walter Benjamin's notion of "literal translation" that through "literal rendering of the syntax" brings the original to a more definitive linguistic realm and thereby contribute to the maturation of the "pure language." To further clarify the molecular process of the translational practice and linguistic transformation, I will employ modern Chinese poet and theorist Yip Wai-lim's "literal translation" of classical Chinese poems to English as a reverse case of Lu Xun's "literal translation" of European syntax. It would also help the English readers to understand the process of syntactical reconfiguration I want to emphasize. We will see that in the literal rendering of the foreign syntax, the target language is often pushed to an "asyntactical limit", to borrow Deleuze's qualification of "writing", which not only requires a new way of writing but also nurtures a new method or attitude of reading. In the last section of this chapter I will discuss the translation of foreign terms, which often requires the translator to *invent* neologisms, especially when it is from European alphabetic language to Chinese characters, and when it is about the things or ideas that were foreign and brand new to the Chinese life-world. The process of this *invention* involves a conscious manipulation, re-arrangement and re-interpretation of Chinese characters. As a pertinent example, I will examine the competitive relationship between Chinese indigenous translation like Yan Fu's and Japanese *Kanji* (Chinese-character) translation of European terminology. I will suggest that a broader *evolutional space of meaning* is the main factor of a translational neologism's survival.

2. *The Trans-Creative project of Zhi Yi (Straight Translation of European Syntax)*

Speaking of the discourse of translation in modern Chinese literature, it seems only natural to start with Yan Fu's canonized three principles – 信達雅 *Xin Da Ya* (Fidelity, Expressivity, and Elegance). In the “Translator's Note” of his translation of Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics*, Yan Fu called them “three difficulties of translation.”¹ Fidelity and expressivity are often about the tension between the original European syntax and Chinese syntax. And elegance is about the conflict between *Wen-Yan* and *Pai-Hua*. As the major pioneer translator of western thought in the late nineteenth century, Yan Fu used classical Chinese (*Wen-Yan*) to translate or rather rewrite *Evolution and Ethics* and other major works of Herbert Spencer and John Stuart Mill. His translation is the classical example of interpretive translation, or what we say in Chinese *Yi-Yi*, [meaning-translation], as opposed to *Zhi-Yi* [straight-translation] which retains the original's arrangement of words and syntax. The differences between *Zhi-Yi* and *Yi-Yi* constitute the basic opposition within the translational space I have called the *translation of grammar*. Due to the radically different grammatical configuration, Chinese translators of European texts often face syntactical problems about the re-order of words and the re-arrangement of sentences, besides the semantic translation of the other culture.

Yan Fu said for his translation of Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics*,

My translation aims to grasp the deep meanings. Therefore, the words
and sentences might be rearranged without sticking to the original

¹ Yan, Fu. (Tr.) 嚴復. 1988 (1898). “Translator's Note” to *Tian Yan Lun (Evolution and Ethics)*. original by Huxley, Thomas H.) Taipei: Shang-Wu Press. 《天演論》. 台

order as long as the original meanings are expressed. That is why my work here is to achieve 達旨 *Da-Zhi*, expressivity of meaning, rather than literal translation. ... Due to the syntax of western texts, a sentence can either consists of only two or three words, or consists of almost a hundred words. If the Chinese translation follows the original sentence, it will probably make no sense at all. If we make omission or take the short cut, the meanings might be lost in the process. Therefore, the translator has to comprehend the whole text, really understand it and write in his own words. ... Here my work is to achieve expressivity. And expressivity is the way to achieve fidelity.²

Here Yan Fu pointed out the basic structural difference between European and Chinese syntaxes. In Chinese, there is no grammatical devices of “multi-clause sentences.” Most Chinese sentences are short and contain only one independent meaning. This difference makes the literal rendering of European syntax very difficult, which is an important point I shall return later.

Most New Culture activists did not agree with Yan Fu’s notion of translation or rewriting, especially his classic style, even though his works had enormous impact on their understanding of western thought, especially the notion of natural selection and evolutionism.

The advocate of “Europeanized literature” 歐化文 *Ou-Hua-Wen*, Fu Si-Nan,

北：商務出版社。

² Ibid.

criticized Yan's "expressivity of meaning" 達旨 *Da-Zhi* [literally, express-meaning] and suggested that it would only lead to a distortion of the original text, 改旨 *Gai-Zhi* [change-meaning]. Instead, Fu Si-Nan argued for the *straight* translation of European syntax, even word-to-word or at least sentence-to-sentence translation, not only to preserve the meaning of the original text, but more importantly to transform Chinese written language as a literary medium.

The author's thought can not exist independently of his language. We have to preserve the author's syntax in order to preserve his thought. If we translate it to another way of speaking, that won't be the author's thought anymore. Therefore 直譯 *Zhi Yi* [straight translation] is the necessary method to "preserve the truth" 存真 *Cun Zhen*. Due to the radical differences between Chinese and western languages, word-to-word direct translation might be impossible, but at least sentence-to-sentence direct translation is possible. *The order of sentence is exactly the order of thought*. This fact does not change from nation to nation. To translate a sentence, the best way is to *translate every word without any omission*, because the translator has a responsibility to the author. *Zhi Yi* [direct translation] is true, *Yi Yi* [interpretive translation] is false. Those who follow *Zhi Yi* is honest, those who follow *Yi Yi* is deceiving. Some people say, "Western words and sentences are too different from Chinese. *Zhi Yi* can only produce nonsense." This argument is ignorant. All we have to do is preserve all the original meanings. *Why insist to force the foreigner to*

*speak like a Chinese snobbish old scholar? Moreover, translation that preserves the western syntax has a huge advantage -- it provides a method of new composition. Nowadays we have no choice but to Europeanize National language. Therefore we have to compose Chinese literature with western meanings. Therefore we have no choice but to use Zhi Yi. We have to use the means we acquire out of Zhi Yi as the means of our own composition.*³ [italics added]

For Fu Si-Nian, translation of European texts is more than the introduction of western thought. It is an efficient method of constructing a new Chinese written language. Or rather, the *translation of European syntax as a method of transforming Chinese syntax* is itself an integral part of the introduction of European and modern way of thinking, as New Culturalists would put it. “To translate a sentence, the best way is to translate every word without any omission.” This principle is particularly blunt because it intentionally disregards the structural differences between two linguistic systems. Actually, *Zhi Yi* as a trans-lingual practice was quite common at that particular historical period. *Pai-Hua* novelist, essayist and translator Lu Xun is the most famous example. Many critics of *Zhi Yi* targeted Lu Xun’s translation. Before I further discuss this criticism and the translational space between *Yi Yi* and *Zhi Yi*, let’s not forget that for radical New Culturalists like Fu Si-Nan and Lu Xun, the Chinese writing system itself is backward or barbarous and *should* or *had better* be abolished eventually. For them,

³ Fu, Si-Nian. 傅斯年. 1940 (1919). “Postscript for a Translated Book” in *Collection on Translation* edited by Huang, Jie-De. <譯書感言>, 《翻譯論集》黃嘉德編。民國叢書第三編50. 上海書店。原載《新潮》第一卷第三號。

therefore, European syntax is not just a linguistic difference that Chinese translators have to transform or translate into Chinese syntax, but an intellectual source that Chinese language *lacks* and should adopt.

More than Fu Si-Nan, Lu Xun not only proposed *Zhi Yi*, he suggested 硬譯 *Ying Yi* [Farfetched Translation] when it is necessary.

Due to the incompetence of the translator and *the inherent flaws of Chinese written language*, many parts of the translation are obscure and even incomprehensible. And I was afraid that the original tone would be lost if the clauses were detached from the main sentence. I had no choice but to stick to 硬譯 *Ying Yi* [*farfetched translation*]. Now all I hope is the readers can bear with me and read it *farfetchedly*.⁴ [italics added]

For Lu Xun the “inherent flaws” of Chinese written language were manifest when it was used to translate the works written in other “advanced” languages. Without the grammatical devices of “multi-clause sentences”, such as “that” or “which”, a Chinese sentence that retains or copies the syntactical structure of the original European multi-clause sentence might become monstrously incomprehensible. Aware of this fact, Lu Xun nevertheless chose to retain the original structure of the sentence, not only because he believed in the so-called “original tone.” Like Fu Si-Nan, Lu Xun also believed that

⁴ Lu, Xun. 鲁迅. 1930. “‘Farfetched Translation’ and the ‘Class-Nature of Literature’ ” in <「硬譯」與「文學的階級性」> 《萌芽月刊》第一卷第三期。

in the process of literal translation which “farfetchedly” retained the original foreign syntax, Chinese written language would eventually more or less *acquire* the European syntax, even though it would be incomprehensible *for now*.

Anyway, I still prefer “fidelity and not smooth.” ... Some people question this kind of translation: why not completely Sinize for the sake of the readers? Is this kind of incomprehensible translation still qualified as translation? My answer is: it *is* translation. This kind of translation imports not only new contents, but also imports *new method of expression*. Chinese written or spoken languages are too imprecise. ... *This [linguistic] impreciseness proves the impreciseness of thought*. In other words, the Chinese brain is slapdash. If we speak in slapdash language forever, all we get is a slapdash shadow even though it is *smooth reading*. In order to cure this *disease*, I think we have to suffer a little bit longer. Import different syntax, no matter it is ancient, from other provinces or foreign countries. They will become our own eventually. This is not a fantasy. Take Japan as an example. Now it is common to find European syntax in Japanese literature.⁵

[italics added]

As such, the import of western syntax as a linguistic and intellectual resource aimed to transform both Chinese language and Chinese readers. In a word, it aims to transform the *Chinese brain*. Literary critic Liang Shi-Qiu condemned this kind of translation as

⁵ Lu, Xun. 鲁迅. 1932. “In Response to J. K. ” in *Literature Monthly* Vol. 1. No. 1. <

“dead” – it was 死譯 *Si Yi* “dead translation”, which did not know how to transform the original to a readable translated text written in smooth target language. He described the experience of reading this kind of “dead” translation “like reading a map, you have to use your finger to look for the syntactical cue and location.”⁶ In response to this criticism, Lu Xun insisted that he preferred “fidelity and not smooth.” Lu Xun argued against “smooth” translation not only because it often belied fidelity, but also because it led to smooth reading which did not require much thinking. For him, smooth reading means *slapdash* reading. On the other hand, *farfetched translation* means *farfetched reading* that forces the readers to think hard in other directions other than the Chinese “slapdash brain” used to suggest. For Lu Xun, *farfetched translation* that chooses to follow the principle of “fidelity” not in terms of meanings but syntactical structures implies *a project of syntactical and cognitive transformation for Chinese writers and readers*. It is therefore indeed a new mental “map” that Chinese people need to learn to read if they want to become “modern” and able to think clearly and scientifically. It introduces a “new method of expression”, and therefore also requires a new way of reading. Indeed, it is a wholistic project of transforming Chinese written language and thereby improving “the” Chinese way of writing, reading, and thinking. For Lu Xun and other radical New Culturalists, this is a feasible project rather than an idealist dream. Lu Xun, who had studied in Japan, took the example of Japanese written language’s

論翻譯:答 J. K. 論翻譯 > 《文學月報》一九三二年六月第一卷第一號。

⁶ Liang, Shi-Qiu. 梁實秋. 1929. “On Lu Xun’s Farfetched Translation” in *Crescent*, Vol.2 No. 6 and 7. (1929/9) <論魯迅先生Lu, Xun. 1930. “ ‘Farfetched Translation’ and the ‘of Literature’ ” in <「硬譯」與「文學的階級性」> 《萌芽月刊》第一

change.

Japanese language is very “different” from European languages. But it gradually adds new syntax. Now it is more suitable than ancient Japanese for the translation [of western texts] and for the preservation of the *original precise tone* [原來的精悍的語氣 *Yuan Lai De Jing Han De Yu Qi*]. At the beginning, the readers do need to “look for the syntactical cue and location,” and do not feel “pleasant” in reading [this kind of translation]. But as time goes by, readers will assimilate [the new syntax] and take it as their own after the process of looking and getting used to it. The grammar of Chinese is even more *incomplete* than ancient Japanese, but it has undergone many changes in history. ... For example, the translation of Buddhist scripts in Tong period. ... Many “grammar, syntax and laws of words” were created. After a while, the readers could understand them without using their fingers to look for cues. Now we have “foreign texts.” Many sentences are in need of creation 新造 *Xin Zao* – worse, *farfetched* creation 硬造 *Ying Zao*. According to my experience, *farfetched* translation is better than breaking the original sentence into many sentences and it is better at preserving the *original precise tone*. But in order to do that, we need new creation because Chinese written

卷第三期。的「硬譯」>《新月》第二卷第六、七號合刊（一九二九年九月）。

language is flawed.⁷ [italics added]

As we see, Lu Xun constantly stressed that in order to preserve “the original precise tone” [原來的精悍的語氣 *Yuan Lai De Jing Han De Yu Qi*] of European texts. It should be noted that, for Lu Xun and other New Culturalists who believed that European languages were more advanced and scientific than Chinese, this “precise tone” was not attributed to any individual author but was guaranteed by the precise grammatical structure of European languages. For them, *grammatical order guides the structure of texts and the logic of thought*.

It was in this belief that another New Culturalist Qian Xuan-Tong said, “Chinese language, with its meanings so obscure and grammar so imprecise, can only represent *ancient primitive* thought, and is absolutely incapable of representing the civilization of the new world since Larmark and Darwin.”⁸ Chinese language was believed to be unable to *represent*, not mention *translate* western thought whose “precise tone” was secured by its grammatical configuration.⁹ According to this almost grammatical

⁷ Lu, Xun. 1930. “‘Farfetched Translation’ and the ‘of Literature’ ” in <「硬譯」與「文學的階級性」> 《萌芽月刊》第一卷第三期。

⁸ See Qian, Xuan-Tong. 錢玄同. 1918a. “Correspondence: China’s language Problem Nowadays” in *New Youth* 4(4). Pp, 350-356. <通信:中國今後之文字問題>, 《新青年》第四卷第四號。P. 352.

⁹ As we see, New Culturalists like Qian Xuan-Tong seemed to embrace a correspondence theory of truth and a representation theory of language. That is to say, they believed that there was a truth out there to be represented by or through human languages. For them, European languages were closer to truth. Regarding the issue of translation of western thought, European languages themselves were often elevated to the status of truth that Chinese language must strive to “represent” in translation. This correspondence theory of linguistic representation of course is problematic. In following discussion I will tackle this problem only through an indirect route, that is,

determinism, the Chinese mind was doomed with such “imprecise” medium of thinking (language). *Westernization of grammar* is therefore an explicit goal of translation for New Culturalists like Lu Xun, Qian Xuan-Tong and Fu Si-Nan at that particular historical time. Indeed, in the above quote, Lu Xun endowed the translator with a *trans-creative* task of transforming Chinese language, as the target language as a whole, and not just as a translated text. It is as part of the grand project of transforming the Chinese mind that Lu Xun and Fu Si-Nan’s insistence on *Zhi Yi* “straight translation” makes sense.

The fallacy of this grammatical determinism, even though it is based on the intention of a grand project of trans-creation, is a blunt underestimation of the *trans-creative space of (cultural) translation*. For one thing it overlooks the characteristics of individual texts written by individual authors. Obviously, not every work written by every European or Japanese writer has an “original precise tone.” Moreover, the New Culturalists were unable to grasp the *molecular* nature of translation as a trans-creative movement because they approached the problem from a grand and molar perspective – European precise mind vs. Chinese slapdash brain. How can such a slapdash, imprecise and laughable language like Chinese “represent” and translate the European texts which are so accurate, precise, and respectable? But again I must emphasize it is much more complicated than a simple psychological problem of so-called “inferiority complex” or “desire” for the master. It was the seemingly discursive balance of binary oppositions

through an elaboration of the creative-transformative nature of translational practice.

like West vs. East that prevented the intention of trans-creation from the realization of its own dynamic.

Lu Xun himself was a productive translator although his translation was often criticized as “obscure”, “incomprehensible” and “dead.” His “straight translation” of European and Japanese syntaxes marked an eager and zealous attempt to transform Chinese language. Perhaps he would prefer to be called an “importer of European grammar”, or a “trans-creator of Chinese language” rather than a simply novelist or translator. Actually at that particular historical period, *Zhi Yi* or “straight translation” was a common trans-lingual practice – translation from European or Japanese works, and “secondary” translation from Japanese translation of European works (translation of translation). Lu Xun only represented one of the most radical and conscious straight or “farfetched” translators.

Especially in the 1930’s, this grand project of linguistic transformation through translation was often articulated through the grand framework of communist revolution. Lu Xun’s close friend Qu Qiu-Bai, who Lu Xun once called “my second self” 知己 (that who really knows me), and who himself was also a translator, invoked an evolutionary framework of historical materialism to articulate this project.

Besides the introduction of original contents Chinese readers, translation has a very important function: that is to help us create a new modern Chinese language. Chinese language (writing) is so impoverished, even the everyday items are nameless. Chinese language is hardly weaned from the level of “gesture language” – “gesture war” always involves in ordinary everyday conversation.

Naturally, *there is hardly any adjectives, verbs, prepositives that express subtle, distinct and complicated relations. This horrible residue of Middle Age Feudalism* is still a stranglehold on the living languages of Chinese people (not just the mass of workers and farmers). Under this condition, the creation of a new language is an imperative mission. The advanced European countries have accomplished this mission in three, four or five hundred years ago.¹⁰
[italics added]

Of course Qu Qiu-Bai was wrong to argue that Chinese language was hardly weaned from the level of “gesture language.” The purpose of this mistaken argument was to place Chinese language on the level of “horrible residue of Middle Age Feudalism” which was supposed to be transcended in the “linear” historical movement. As I pointed out and investigated in the previous chapters, for the New Culturalist Chinese language was *the* embodiment of Chinese backwardness. It is true that linguistic trans-creation is inseparable from the grand project of Chinese modernity. Unfortunately, when the problem of language was raised to the level of the “whole” culture or the “historical stage”, the trans-creative movement of writing and translation was often overlooked and the effort led to a molar dead end, as we see in the above quote.

This trend of *Zhi Yi* (straight translation) and “Europeanized literature” of course worried some writers, translators and literary critics. Like Liang Shi-Qiu who attacked

¹⁰ Qu, Qiu-Bai. 瞿秋白. 1931. “On Translation” in *Cross Road*, No.1 and 2

Lu Xun's translation as "dead translation," famous writer and translator Lin Yu-Tang also criticized "Europeanized style of writing" [語體歐化 *Yu Ti Ou Hua*] and "word-to-word translation" (literal translation) [字字對譯 *Zi Zi Dui Yi*].¹¹ Lin Yu-Tang distinguished among four degrees of "fidelity" -- 死譯 *Shi-Yi* "dead translation," 直譯 *Zhi-Yi* "straight translation," 意譯 *Yi-Yi* "interpretive translation," 胡譯 *Hu-Yi* "abusive translation." And we will see, unlike Lu Xun who emphasized the "precise tone" of the original, Lin's criterion of fidelity was the communication of "meaning." In contrast to Fu Si-Nan and Lu Xun's explicit call for "Europeanization," Lin Yu-Tang argued that a good translation should undergo a process of "nationalization." He labeled Yan Fu's and Lin Shu's translation as "abusive" because they actually rewrote the originals in Chinese classic language, idioms, and style. That is to say their *nationalization* of the European texts went too far. Nevertheless, for Lin, nationalization is a necessary step of translation. Otherwise, the translation won't be "real Chinese."

Composition must adhere to the *psychology of Chinese language* completely. ... If the translator does not translate the thought of original text into meaningful Chinese, but translate word-to-word, *Zhi Yi*, the product will be *seemingly Chinese but not actually Chinese*. It will only make sense in appearance but actually make no sense. It will not be able to communicate. Even if it is grammatically perfect, it is

(1931/12/11, 25). <論翻譯> 《十字街頭》第一二期。

¹¹ Lin, Yu-Tang. 林語堂. 1940. "On Translation" in *Collection on Translation* edited by Huang, Jie-De. <論翻譯>, 《翻譯論集》黃嘉德編。民國叢書第三編50. 上

not the way Chinese people talk. Every language, its grammar and syntax, has its characteristics and must *follow conventions*. Whether it makes “sense” or “nonsense” depends on whether its syntax *follows conventions*. What goes against the conventions is “nonsense,” even if it is not grammatically wrong. ... Whatever the style a composition is, it will remain nonsense if it does not go through the process of “nationalization.” Translation makes no exception. Moreover, the work of Europeanization is mostly about terminology. It is very difficult to Europeanize the syntax. And it is not possible to Europeanize every sentence.¹² [italics added]

Lin Yu-Tang emphasized the “psychology of Chinese language” and linguistic “conventions.” For him, the task of the translator is to “make sense” in the target language. That is to say, the opposition between “sense” and “nonsense”, rather than “precise” and “imprecise”, guided his consideration. Whether a composition or translation is qualified as “Chinese” depends on its following the psychological and syntactical conventions of the given language we call “Chinese.” The contrasts between this view and the New Culturalists’ like Lu Xun’s are indeed about the linguistic *status* and *value* of Chinese language itself. For Lin, Chinese language as a literary medium of thought is no less valid than European or Japanese languages. For Lu Xun, this presupposition itself should be put under the question mark. They also approached the

海書店。

¹² Ibid.

problem of fidelity from different levels. For Lin, fidelity means to “communicate” the “meaning” of the text. For Lu Xun, fidelity means to “preserve” the original “precise tone (in terms of syntax).” As such, Lin Yu-Tang argued that the basic unit of translation was the sentence rather than the word. He was obviously arguing against Fu Si-Nan’s suggestion that “to translate a sentence, the best way is to translate every word without any omission.” For Lin Yu-Tang, the sentence is mainly a unit of “meaning.” For Fu Si-Nan and Lu Xun, the sentence (in its syntax, and order of words) is more than a unit of meaning. For them, the sentence contains the precise “order of thinking” as the “new method of expression” that Chinese writers and readers have to learn and get used to. Lin Yu-Tang conceded the inevitability of Europeanization of terminology with the introduction of western thought, but not Europeanization of the basic syntactical structure of Chinese language. On the other hand, New Culturalists like Fu Si-Nan, Lu Xun and Di Qiu-Bai preferred word-to-word translation if possible because it was only through a radical literal translation that the Chinese translator was forced to create new way of expression that filled the lexical *and* grammatical “lack” of Chinese language.

Therefore, the fundamental question underlying the opposition between *Zhi-Yi* “straight translation” and *Yi-Yi* “interpretive translation” is the evaluation of Chinese language as the target language of translation. My purpose here is not to decide which method of translation is better or even more suitable for the translation of western thought into Chinese language. I aim to evaluate how certain presuppositions about the nature and value of Chinese language affected New Culturalists’ translational practice. Lu Xun’s incomprehensible translational works represent an intentional trans-creative project of Chinese language (and mind) through certain translational practices – literal

translation of European syntax. In their discourse, however, this project was always referred back to the grand project of modernity and westernization and therefore often ignored the molecular nature of its actual practices. Perhaps this was the reason why Lu Xun's "straight" translation inevitably became "dead." The creative and transformative nature of translation does not become silent when it is "literal" translation. On the contrary, literal translation requires an intensified molecular trans-creative effort which extends the boundaries of the target language. A return from ideological and evaluative discourse to a "more definitive linguistic realm," to borrow Benjamin's term, might be a way to rethink the problem of translation as a linguistic reform.

3. The Molecular Nature of a Trans-Creative Linguistic Project

It should be noted that the advocate or practice of "literal translation" as a transformation of the language does not necessarily require the presupposition that the target language is "inferior." It might as well be based on a religious faith to the "origin" and a quasi-theological linguistic universalism. New Culturalists' zealous advocacy of 世界語 *Shi-Jie Yu* "language of the world" (Japanese *Kanji* and Chinese translation for Esperanto) in the 1920's, as I discussed in chapter 2, was a revealing historical example which showed how linguistic cosmopolitanism as a dream of an oppressed nation like China would probably require a radical devaluation of its own language and writing system. On the other hand, German translator and cultural theorist Walter Benjamin's notion of translation as the seed of "pure language" is an illuminating example which shows that linguistic universalism as well as the ideal of a transparent language almost naturally leads to a trans-creative movement of given

languages. As such the case of Chinese New Culturalists can be understood as a radicalized (post-)colonial version of this trans-creative movement. However, its particular historical consciousness of opposition (more to “Chinese feudalism” than to “western imperialism”) almost inevitably led to a molar dualism between China and West. As I emphasize, this historical specificity might be the main reason why they were unable to recognize the molecular nature of cross-cultural translation. Benjamin proposes a similar “straight translation of the syntax” from another perspective, and more importantly points to the *molecular linguistic movement* that a translator must engage to fulfill her “task.” In this section I want to discuss Walter Benjamin’s notion of literal translation to clarify the significance of this molecular linguistic movement for a case like Chinese New Culturalists’ trans-creative translational project, and its significance for the theory of cultural translation in general.

In “The Task of the Translator”, Benjamin insists that “words” rather than “sentences” are the basic unit of translation, and that only through “literal translation”, or rather “literal rendering of the syntax” can the translator extract or refine the “light” of the original. Due to the complexity of the theory, I have to quote Benjamin at length on this point.

Fragments of a vessel which are to be glued together must match one another in the smallest details, although they need not be like one another. In the same way a translation, instead of resembling the meaning of the original, must lovingly and in detail incorporate *the original’s mode of signification*, thus making both the original and the translation *recognizable as fragments of a greater language*, just as

fragments are parts of a vessel. For this very reason translation must in large refrain from wanting to communicate something, from rendering the sense, and in this the original is important to it only insofar as it has already relieved the translator and his translation of the effort of assembling and expressing what is to be conveyed. ... [T]he significance of fidelity as ensured by literalness is that the work reflects the *great longing for linguistic complementation*. A real translation is transparent; it does not cover the original, does not block its light, but allows the pure language, as though reinforced by its own medium, to shine upon the original all the more fully. This may be achieved, above all, by *a literal rendering of the syntax which proves words rather than sentences to be the primary element of the translator*. For if the sentence is the wall before the language of the original, literalness is the arcade.¹³ [italics added]

This is one of the few places in this essay Benjamin directly mention the “syntax” of the original. But it is still not fully clear how a “real translation” which is “transparent” may be achieved by “the literal rendering of the syntax” other than the fact that the syntax of the original will still be *visible* in the translation. Does the visibility of the syntax of the original text in another (the target) language necessarily mean the higher transparency of language itself? Against what criteria do we judge the transparency of a text? Does the visibility of foreign syntax in the translation mean the *recognizability* of both the

¹³ Benjamin, Walter. 1986. “The Task of the Translator” in *Illumination*. Edited by

original and the translation as fragments of a “greater language”? The “literal rendering of the syntax”, which is the most pertinent point to my case here, is probably the most taken-for-granted and under-discussed point of Benjamin’s notion of literal translation.¹⁴ Perhaps it is only through a better elaboration of Benjamin’s notion of “language itself” or “pure language” can we clarify this particular point about the literal rendering of the original’s syntax.

For Benjamin “fidelity” is not about “communication” of the original “meaning.” Indeed, Benjamin asserts that translation that aims to “communicate” is “bad.” The concern of Benjamin’s translator is “language itself” rather than meanings. It can be a univocal language lost as the legend of Babel Tower, or it can be a universal language yet to come as the dream of 世界語 *Shi-Jie Yu* “language of the world.” With this presupposition or a dream of linguistic universalism, Benjamin insists that it is the task of the translator to elevate the original to a “higher and purer linguistic air,” or transplant the original to a “more definitive linguistic realm.” The real translation reflects the “*great longing for linguistic complementation.*” That is to say, its

Hannah Arendt. Translated by Harry Zohn. New York: Schocken Books. Pp. 78-79.

¹⁴ For example, Derrida interprets Benjamin’s privilege of “literalness” or “literality” mainly from the perspective of “the privilege of naming” and generally overlooks the issue of the syntax. It is probably because Derrida is not concerned with the translingual practice outside the Indo-European group of languages. “This privilege of the word obviously supports that of the name and with it what is proper to the proper name, the stakes and the very possibility of the translation contract. It opens onto the *economic* problem of translation, whether it be a matter of economy as the law of the proper or of economy as a quantitative relation (is it translating to transpose a proper name into several words, into a phrase or into a description, and so forth?)” (See Derrida, Jacques. 1985. “Des Tours de Babel” in *Difference in Translation*. Cornell University Press. P. 188.)

foreignness and visible artificiality as opposed to a “smooth” text mark the fact that it is *a language still in the making*. What Benjamin presumes is more than a metalanguage or what linguistic psychologists have called Mentalese (an human internal language). His “origin” of languages is both a lost beginning and a becoming language. It is an origin yet to come. It will be a language that comprises all “intentions” from all given languages. Perhaps it can be understood as a Bergsonian Virtual Whole which is at the same the “origin” and “goal” of the creative evolution (of the language).

While all individual elements of foreign languages – words, sentences, structure – are mutually exclusive, these languages *supplement* one another in their intentions.¹⁵ [italics added]

Again it is only in the spirit or dream of a universal language (script) that one can say languages “supplement” each other in their intentions. For Benjamin, therefore, every language is incomplete and yet to be completed. More importantly, every language is still in its becoming in terms of its “intention” – its meaning.

In the individual, unsupplemented languages, *meaning* is never found in relative independence, as in individual words or sentences; rather it is in *constant state of flux* – until it is able to emerge as pure language from the harmony of all the various modes of intentions.¹⁶ [italics added]

Therefore, translation as a trans-lingual practice constitutes the process of *trans-lingual*

¹⁵ Benjamin, Walter. 1986. “The Task of the Translator” in *Illumination*. Edited by Hannah Arendt. Translated by Harry Zohn. New York: Schocken Books. P. 74.

¹⁶ Benjamin, Walter. 1986. *Ibid.* P.74.

creative evolution of *the* language. The criterion of fidelity thus could not be communication of the “meaning” of the original text when the meaning is not given but is still becoming. Translation is the process through which the becoming of meaning moves with the becoming of pure language.

Note that unlike Chinese New Culturalists who focused their critical edge on Chinese as the target language of translation, Benjamin did not privilege any particular language or system of languages over the others, at least in theory. Nevertheless, it is doubtless that according to Benjamin *the boundaries of the target language* will be expanded as the original’s “mode of significance” and its “foreign” syntax is incorporated into the language. This foreignness marks its becoming-ness. Both Luther’s translation of the Hebrew Bible and Hölderlin’s translation of Greek tragedy are great examples of expanding the boundaries of German as the target language through literal translation. Walter Benjamin’s citation of Rudolf Pannwitz resonates with Chinese New Culturalists like Fu Si-Nan and Lu Xun’s view on translation.

Our translations, even the best ones, proceed from a wrong premise.

They want to turn Hindi, Greek, English into German instead of turning German into Hindi, Greek, English. ... The basic error of the translator is that he preserves the state in which his own language happens to be instead of allowing his language to be powerfully affected by the foreign tongue.¹⁷

The opposition between “domesticating” and “foreignizing” of course is a basic

¹⁷ Benjamin, Walter. 1986. Ibid. P. 80-81.

translational question and by no means restricted to the (post-)colonial situation that Chinese New Cultural generation encountered.¹⁸ Nevertheless, as I emphasize, this opposition is often radicalized in such situation. And more importantly this radicalization often leads to a totalist and molar dualism which conceals the molecular nature of translational effects. That is why Benjamin's emphasis of *words* as the "primary element of the translator" in her or his "literal rendering of the syntax" plays a central role in my discussion of Chinese translational practice. The individual words of the original and its literal translation are the "fragments of a (linguistic) vessel" which is still in the making.

Although Fu Si-Nan and Lu Xun argued for word-to-word translation and the "straight translation of the syntax," their real target was a totalist import or a grand "transplantaion" of "European syntax" or "European grammar" *as if* there is only one European grammar, *as if* the thing they called "European grammar" is a completed goal that Chinese writers could just adopt. Au such, they were unable to see the transversal molecular trans-creative movement between the source language and the target language.

4. Towards the Asyntactical Limit of the Language

Modern Chinese poet and theorist Yip Wai-lim provides a case of literal translation of Chinese classic poetry to English which will be helpful in this matter. Yip, himself a

¹⁸ Cf. Eco, Umberto. 2001. *Experiences In Translation*. translated by Alastair McEwen. London: University of Toronto Press. Pp. 22-25.

famous poet of Chinese New Poetry, criticizes the “excessive discursiveness” of modern Chinese or *Pai-Hua* as a literary and poetic medium. He asserts that this “excessive discursiveness” is a result of Europeanization in the grammar and syntax, especially the subject-verb-object relation and the use of enjambments.

The *Pai-hua* is being Europeanized (as the Chinese called it) in the process of translation (both journalistic and literary). Many efforts have been made to fit *the Procrustean bed*: introduction of Occidental syntax, adoption of foreign grammatical frameworks as bases for the Chinese sentence, and application of punctuation to regulate and clarify Chinese linguistic structure. All these were intended, no doubt, to tell the world that we have just as much *logic* and are just as *scientific* as the West, as if *poetic ambiguity and richness* were a shame!¹⁹ [italics added]

As I discussed in this and previous chapters, as late as in the early twentieth century of the inflexive type of Indo-European alphabetic languages has become the standard according to which Chinese written language was judged and intentionally transformed. For the Chinese New Culturalists and those who believed in cultural and linguistic “Europeanization”, “European Grammar” was a goal that Chinese writers and readers had to set for themselves in order to get rid of the old Chinese *slapdash* mind (in Lu Xun’s term), and to achieve a *scientific* mind. On the contrary, for Yip who believes in

¹⁹ Yip, Wai-lim. 1970. “Introduction” for (tr. and ed.) *Modern Chinese Poetry: Twenty Poets From the Republic of China, 1955-1965*. Iowa: University of Iowa Press. Pp. xvii.

cultural and linguistic specificities, “European Grammar” is merely *the Procrustean bed* that some Chinese translators and writers forced Chinese written language to fit in. Looking from another perspective, however, Yip seems to suggest another almost essentialist notion of Chinese written language – “poetic ambiguity and richness” as opposed to the “scientific” and “logic.” This quasi-essentialist notion of Chinese writing is also manifest in his view of translation.

Intriguingly, Yip who obviously argues against the “Europeanized” Chinese composition, suggests that in order to grasp the real meaning and the “cinematic effect”²⁰ of the classical (and modern) Chinese poem, its English translation should be a word-to-word translation, in other word, a literal rendering of Chinese syntax (the original order of the words).

Most English translations of Chinese poetry simply *let the target horizon mask and master the source horizon*. The translators seemed unaware that classical Chinese poetry possesses *a whole different* set of cultural aesthetic assumptions, that its *syntax* is in many ways inseparable from *perception*, and that by imposing Indo-European linguistic habits upon the classical Chinese without any adjustment they were significantly changing the source horizon.²¹ [italics added]

There are several points to discuss in this short quote. First of all, there are some striking similarities between Yip’s notion of literal translation and that of Fu Si-Nan,

²⁰ Yip, Wai-lim. 1970. Pp. xvii.

²¹ See Yip, Wai-Lim. 1993. “Prologue” for *Diffusion of Distances: Dialogues between Chinese and Western Poetics*. University of California Press. P.2.

who as the advocate of “Europeanized composition” suggested that the literal translation of European syntax would provide Chinese writers a “new method of composition.” Yip’s criticism of the English translational practice that “let the target horizon mask and master the source horizon” sresonates with Fu’s criticism of Yan’s “expressivity of meaning” (rather than “literal translation”) as the principle of his translation of Huxley’s *Evolution and Ethics*. Fu Si-Nan asked, “Why insist to force the foreigner to speak like a Chinese snobbish old scholar?” Likewise, Yip might as well ask that “Why insist to force the classical Chinese poet to write like an imperialist English man?” Both Yip and Fu support the same method of translation – literal rendering of the syntax. And their reason is to preserve the original’s “mode of signification”, to borrow Benjamin’s term. However, for them the final goal of translation is not about the “maturation of the pure language” but the preservation of certain “merits” of given linguistic systems. For Yip the syntax of classical Chinese poetry is “inseparable from *perception*”, especially the “cinematic effect” of Chinese sentences, while for Fu as well as for Lu Xun European syntax represents clear and scientific thinking that the Chinese mind lacks and needs to learn in order to improve their capacity of *cognition*.

Let us examine Yip Wai-lim’s example. He compared classical Chinese poet Tu Fu’s original line 國破山河在 with its *Pai-Hua* translation.

國	破	山	河	在
empire	broken	mountain[s]	river[s]	exist

becomes, in Liu Ta-ch’eng’s hand [15 characters to the original 5],

國家/已經/破碎了/祇是/山河/依然/如故

country(empire)/already/broken/only/mountain river/still/as before
 “Already”(i-ching) indicates past and “only” and “still” are analytical
 elements destroying both *the montage presentation and the directness*
 in the same matter the English version have turned *drama* into
analysis. Lines of this kind, to our surprise, abound in much of the
 poetry written in the new medium.²² [italics added]

For English translation of this line, Yip quotes three versions

Though a country be surrendered, hills and rivers endure.

Bynner (1929)

A nation though fallen, the land yet remains.

W. J. B. Fletcher (1933)

The state may fall, but the hills and streams remain.

David Hawkes (1967)

Note how such analytical or explanatory elements as “though,” “yet”,
 or “but” have destroyed the *montage presentation* in the original
 (which the paratactical nature of Chinese line enforces), characterized
 by the simultaneous presences of the “broken empire” and “mountains
 and rivers”. Two phases of perception, like two cones of light, feels,
 by himself, *without being hold*, the contrast and tension in the scenery

²² Yip, Wai-lim. 1970. “Introduction” for (tr. and ed.) *Modern Chinese Poetry: Twenty Poets From the Republic of China, 1955-1965*. Iowa: University of Iowa Press. Pp. xvi.

so presented.²³ [italics original]

For Yip the “montage presentation and the directness” of classical Chinese poetry is irreducible and can only be preserved through word-to-word translation without adding any “analytical or explanatory elements.” Actually, a classical Chinese poem is often like a “drama” or a “montage presentation” of characters because it is the relation and order of the characters that constitute the meaning of a sentence or a line, especially in poetry. Therefore a eurocentric mind like Hegel’s would assert that a language like Chinese, “has no way of indicating grammatical case. Rather it simply leaves its words standing one next to the other.”²⁴ I discussed this kind of “grammatical prejudice” in chapter 4. Here it suffices to say Yip’s literal translation of Chinese poetry is an interesting experiment which asks the readers to experience the performance of “words” or rather Chinese characters, although the translation of the performance from Chinese characters to English words must already transform the “perception” which Yip emphasizes for the poetic effect. For my purpose here this brave experiment reveals the radically different syntactical horizons of Chinese and Indo-European languages, and the molecular efforts the translator must make.

Now as we can see from the above quote, the *Pai-Hua* version of the line seems structurally closer to its English translations than to the original. In the original *Wen-Yan* version, there are not any terms that indicate the tense of the sentence, nor any

²³ Yip, Wai-lim. 1970. P. xiv.

²⁴ Hegel quoted in Saussy, Huan. 1993. *The Problem of A Chinese Aesthetic*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. P. 165. For Hegel’s semiology, see also Derrida, J. 1982. “Tympan” in *Margins of Philosophy*. Tr. by Alan Bass. The University of Chicago Press. Esp., 102-103.

“analytical elements” like “only” and “still.”

Nevertheless the readers might have noted that compare to the English version, in both the *Wen-Yan* (original classical Chinese) and the *Pai-Hua* versions there are no grammatical and lexical equivalents for definitive article “the”, plural indicate “s” and the verb “to be” or the inflection of “verb tense.” These basic grammatical rules remain unchanged due to the specific nature of Chinese characters and syntax. From this simple example, the English readers can imagine how difficult a task the literal rendering of Indo-European syntax into Chinese will be. Not to mention the grammatical devices of “multi-clause sentences”, such as “that” or “which.” The translator will have to “invent” many grammatical and lexical “equivalents” that did not exist before. And the product at first might be as Lin Yu-Tang’s description of Lu Xun’s translation, 天書 *Tian Shu* [literally, Heaven-Book] sarcastically meaning the book that human beings are unable to understand. English readers of Yip’s literal translation of Chinese poetry might ask the same question that Lu Xun’s imaginary readers ask: “Is this kind of incomprehensible translation still qualified as translation?” And Yip’s answer might be the same as Lu Xun’s, that “it *is* translation.” That is to say, it is what Benjamin calls “real translation” that is *transparent and molecular*. No matter whether it is literal translation from Indo-European languages to Chinese or from Chinese to Indo-European languages, it must involve a certain reconfiguration of the given syntax of the target language. This reconfiguration of the syntax often leads to the expansion of the boundaries of the language, as Benjamin points out.

Here Gilles Deleuze’s theory of writing can shed a light on the creative nature of this translational practice.

The problem of *writing*: writers, as Proust says, invent a new language within language, a foreign language, as it were. They bring to light new grammatical or syntactical powers. They force language outside its customary furrows, they make it delirious [délirer]. But the problem of writing is also inseparable from a problem of *seeing* and *hearing*: in effect, when another language is created within language, it is language in its entirety that tends toward an “asyntactical,” “agrammatical” limit, or that communicates with its own outside.²⁵

[italics added]

This passage about literature surprisingly resonates with the trans-creative situation Chinese New Cultural generation faced. It is imperative to note that languages are not simply something given or conventional. Languages constantly change. More importantly every language is elastic in its constitution of words and sentences. The elasticity of languages is manifest in literature, especially in the experimental writing of poetry “when another language is created within language.” But it is also manifest in translation, especially “literal rendering of the syntax” from a language that is radically different in basic structure from the target language. In this literal/translational practice, the boundaries of the target language is pushed to its “asyntactical limit” as we see in the “broken” sentences in Yip’s English rendering of classical Chinese poem or in the *recognizability* of the Indo-European original’s syntax of the “multi-clause sentences” in Lu Xun’s *incomprehensible* Chinese translation. In this kind of translation, the

²⁵ Deleuze G. 1997. [1993] *Essays: Critical and Clinical*. Minneapolis: University of

language and its readers are indeed made “delirious.” It pushes the language’s elasticity to the extreme and reveals the *artificiality* of any given syntax of the language.

Under the grand title of “Europeanization,” there are virtually endless molecular trans-creative transformations of grammatical equivalents as well as endless molecular trans-creative transferences of meanings. Many scholars point out that “Europeanization” in terms of syntax, style and theory has been a valuable resource for *Pai-Hua* literature, especially for modern Chinese poetry or what we usually call 新詩 *Xin Shi*, New Poetry, as opposing to classic Chinese poetry written in *Wen-Yan*.²⁶ The notion of “Europeanization” is clearly in need of clarification. I am not saying that we should just stop using this term. But I am suggesting that its usage should be qualified, that we should always bear in mind that any cultural and linguistic practice of “Europeanization” which is valuable must in a way involve a creative transformation of the European source itself in the process of being blended into the target mode. It is a transversal molecular process of trans-creation. When we say the language we now call “modern Chinese” is grammatically or syntactical “Europeanized”, we are making a *grand* statement that tells us little if not nothing about the real movement of its transformation. Due to the specific nature of the target language, the minimum elements of the source language can not be transferred without being *transformed* to a new

Minnesota Press. P. iv.

²⁶ Zhang, Tao-Zhou. 張桃洲. 2002. “The Poetic Space of Modern Chinese Language” in *Social Science in China*, 2002(5). <現代漢語的詩性空間 – 論20世紀中國新詩語言問題> 《中國社會科學》北京：中國社會科雜誌社。

linguistic work, whether it is higher or purer as Benjamin's ideal translation. A bilingual reader of Yip's English literal rendering of Chinese poetry or Lu Xun's literal translation of Russian sentence would depict this transformation, while the others might only see unreadable nonsense. How to make sense out of nonsense? That is the question of literal rendering of the foreign syntax.

5. The Translation of Nouns and the Evolutional Space of Meanings

Besides translation of the syntax, translation of nouns is another major task the translator has to struggle with especially when the nouns signify the things or events that are foreign to the target language and society. This task is particular urgent in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century when the all-dimensional project of modernity and westernization just started in China. As Lu Xun once said,

In writing we can avoid using a difficult noun or verb. But in translation, we can not do that. We have to think very hard how to translate it [the difficult noun or verb] into Chinese. Sometimes it is like there is a locked box in the brain while the key is nowhere to find. No wonder Yan Fu said: "the establishment of a name takes a month's hesitation." [一名之立 旬月踟躕]²⁷

Indeed, many new foreign terms are like locked little inner boxes whose keys the translator has nowhere to find but has to make by themselves. The problem of 譯名 *Yi*

²⁷ Lu, Xun. 魯迅. 1935. "No Title" in *Literature Monthly* Vol. 5. No. 1. (1935/10). < 題未定 > 《文學》月刊第五卷第一號。

Ming [translational names] has been a major issue in Chinese translation of western thought. Moreover, when it is translation from European alphabetical languages into Chinese figurative-phonetic characters, the translation of nouns also faces the choice between 音譯 *Ying Yi* [phonetic translation] and 義譯 *Yi Yi* [significant translation]. The former uses Chinese characters as phonetic signifiers to spell the European noun. For example, the author of *Ma's Chinese Grammar* (1898), the first modern attempt to systematically apply European Latin grammar to Chinese script, Ma Jian-Zhong translated “grammar” into 葛郎瑪 *Ge-Lang-Ma*, using three Chinese characters to imitate or spell the sound of the word “grammar.” This translation was later fully replaced by the Japanese *Kanji* translation of “grammar”, 文法 *Wen-Fa* (literally “script law” or the law of script). The difference between phonetic translation and significant translation is that in the former Chinese readers who do not know the original term could not possibly guess the meaning from the characters because the combination of the characters used as phonetic letters usually makes no sense, while in the latter the readers can guess the meaning from the arrangement of the characters, as we say in Chinese 望文生義 *Wang-Wen-Sheng-Yi* [look at the script and produce the meaning]. However, “look at the script and produce the meaning” also constitutes the main reason to oppose significant translation because the meaning it produces might not be sufficient or faithful to the original. Like *Yi-Yi* [meaning-translation] in the translation of the syntax, significant translation of foreign nouns must involve a process of interpretation of the original. On the other hand, phonetic translation is like Husserl’s phenomenological method of *epoché* –suspension of the meaning, and therefore avoids the pitfall of “looking at the script and produce the meaning” and is able to grasp the

supposedly implicit whole range of meaning.

In the early stage of modern Chinese translation of western thought, phonetic translation was a common way to solve the translational problem of new nouns and new concepts. However, many of these terms were later replaced by their Japanese *Kanji* translations, which on the other hand were significant translations. For example, one of the main goals of *New Youth* journal in the 1910's 賽因斯 *Sai-Yin-Si* (Science) was later completely replaced by the Japanese *Kanji* translation 科學 *Ke-Xue*. This replacement was not restricted to Chinese phonetic translations. Many Chinese significant translations themselves were also replaced by Japanese *Kanji* translations, including translational terms for “society”, “economy”, “politics”, “philosophy”, “metaphysics” and more. Indeed, if due to some twisted nationalist belief Chinese people now decided not to use these Japanese *Kanji* terms any more, they probably would not be able to communicate with each other. One of the many reasons of this replacement is that many important figures in early modern China had studied in Japan, including Liang Qi-Cho who argued for “speedy” translation from Japanese interpretation or translation of western thought. Yan Fu’s indigenous translation of foreign terms formed another line and often had to compete with Japanese *Kanji* translation. And this competition usually ended with the triumph of Japanese *Kanji* translation over Yan’s translation. Other than convenience, there must be other reasons that Japanese *Kanji* translation of foreign terms often takes over the Chinese indigenous translation. I suggest that one of the main reason might be the trans-creative space of 望文生義 *Wang-Wen-Sheng-Yi* [look at the script and produce the meaning].

Let me try to clarify this point through a brief discussion of the opposition between

phonetic and significant translation of foreign terms, and the competition between Yan's translation and Japanese *Kanji* translation of several important concepts in social sciences.

Early modern Chinese linguist Hu Yi-Lu argued for “significant translation” of foreign terms because the so-called “phonetic translation” was not really translation but mere a kind of “borrow terms” 借用語 *Jie-Yong-Yu*, although in some cases it was inevitable to use “phonetic translation.” Hu Yi-Lu suggested we use “Chinese indigenous names” when it was possible and adopted Japanese *Kanji* names only when we could not find indigenous names for the foreign terms.

When we can find the indigenous name to translate the foreign term, we should use it. ... For instance, even though the given concepts of 名學 *Ming Xue* [the Study of Names] are not as advanced as western “logic” 邏輯 *Luo-Ji*, along with the progress of the study, the concept of the name will progress as well, just like the ancient Greek logic to modern logic. ...

If we can not find the indigenous name and Japanese scholars already translated the foreign term with Chinese characters and the name makes sense in Chinese, we can adopt it. ... When the Japanese translational name is not appropriate but difficult to improve, we can nevertheless follow the convention. ... For example, 心理學 *Xin-Li-Xue* [psychology] does not really make sense according to the given meaning of Chinese character *Xin*. ... When the Japanese translational name abuses our indigenous name, we had better correct it. For

example, 經濟 *Jing-Ji* [economy] comprises a broad range of meaning, and is not restricted to economy of money and food.

Therefore it is better to translate “economy” to 生計 *Sheng-Ji*.²⁸

The above quote was written more than a half century ago when many neologisms were still in negotiation. History seemed to prove Hu’s suggestions in vain because many “indigenous names” were replaced by Japanese *Kanji* names and many “inappropriate” Japanese *Kanji* names have already assimilated into modern Chinese language. 名學 *Ming Xue* [the Study of Names] was Yan Fu’s translation of “logic”, as his translation of John Stuart Mill’s *System of Logic*. 邏輯 *Luo-Ji* is the Chinese phonetic translation of “logic.” Now 邏輯 *Luo-Ji* is a common term in modern Chinese while *Ming Xue* has faded away in the background and only exist in historical documents. Many Yan’s translational neologisms had followed the same fate of oblivion. For example, Yan’s translation of sociology 群學 *Qun Xue* [the Study of Groups or Grouping] also had to give way to the Japanese *Kanji* translation 社會學 *She-Hwei Xue* [the Study of Associations], even though according to its “original” meaning *She-Hwei* is closer to a concrete “association” than the abstract notion of “society.” As time goes by, and with the evolution of the neologism in its usage, however, the Chinese term *She-Hwei* seems to acquire the abstract meaning it needs to indicate the foreign term “society.” Likewise, the Japanese *Kanji* translation for economy 經濟 *Jing-Ji* might have been based on a

²⁸ Hu, Yi-Lu. 胡以魯. 1940. “On Translational Names ” in *Collection on Translation* edited by Huang Jie-De. Shang-Hai Books. <論譯名>, 《翻譯論集》黃嘉德編。民國叢書第三編50. 上海書店。

misunderstanding of the “original” Chinese term *Jing-Ji* which in classical texts means something closer to politics than economy, but with its common usage its meaning also *evolves* and becomes closer to the foreign term “economy” than politics.

The *evolution of meaning* in translational neologisms marks the space the translator opens up when she or he invents a new name. The survival or fading of a neologism depends on many social and cultural factors, which are usually beyond the control of the translator. In general Yan’s translational neologisms were seen as too “classical” at that time. This fact made their rate of current very low. The difficulty of incorporating these terms into the *Pai-Hua* context might have also contributed to their decline. On the other hand, Japanese *Kanji* neologisms often presented a blunt arrangement of Chinese characters, and were sometimes based on an interesting “abuse” of Chinese classical terms or as we say in Chinese 斷章取義 *Duan-Zhang-Qu-Yi* [take the meaning out of the full (con)text]. As such the Japanese *Kanji* neologisms presented a *familiar exoticism* that was appealing to Chinese new intellectuals. For these new intellectuals Japan was an object of imitation because its degree of westernization and modernization was deeper than China. At the same time, however, they seemed to uphold an attitude of *Orientalism* towards Japan and saw Japan as a *better* and *purer* East.

We should say Japanese people are the real Chinese people. They are Chinese people from the Tang dynasty.²⁹

When we lived in Japan, it was like in a foreign country and in the ancient

²⁹ Gu, Hong-Ming. 辜鴻銘. 1996 [1924]. “The Revival of Chinese Civilization and Japan” in *Collection of Gu Hong-Ming*. Hai Nan Books. <中國文明的復興與日本> 《辜鴻銘文集》，黃興濤譯。海南出版社。

China simultaneously. Indeed, this ancient time is living in the foreign country with complete health. Therefore it was not a dreamy false perception.³⁰

The above two quotes were written separately by the radical cultural conservative Gu Hong-Ming and the advocate of *Pai-Hua* “literary revolution” Zhou Zuo-Ren. Despite their different positions in cultural politics, they both connected Japan to the ancient China in terms of its customs and culture. For many Chinese new intellectuals the use of Chinese characters in Japanese writing also contributed to this feeling of familiar exoticism. For them Japan was like a meeting point of China and West. It was a “purer” East (or even a “real” China) because it preserved many customs from the ancient China, and it was a “better” East because it was more fully “westernized” than China in terms of other aspects like technology and introduction of western thought.

Many Japanese *Kanji* neologisms are based on a re-interpretation or even “abuse” of Chinese classical texts. This practice not only produced an effect of *familiar exoticism*, but also allowed a broader *evolutional space of meaning* than Yan’s translational neologisms. Yan’s translation was often too classical and precise to open up an appropriate space in the forming *Pai-Hua* discursive field. Of course the transcreation of neologisms through re-interpretation and re-arrangement of Chinese characters was not specific to Japanese *Kanji* translation but was indeed a task of the Chinese translator in general. In the early modern stage, however, Japanese *Kanji* translator of western thought seemed to manifest a striking productivity. (Contemporary

³⁰ Zhou, Zuo-Ren. 周作人. 1987 [1935]. “Everyday Life in Japan” in *Scarpbook of*

Japanese translators, on the other hand, prefer *Kana* phonetic translation that uses Japanese alphabetic letters *Kana* to spell western terms). One of the most interesting example is the popular translation for suffix *-ism*, 主義 *Zhu-Yi* [literally “main-meaning”, principle, belief]. Now it is not clear whether this term was a new “invention” through combining the two characters or it was a re-interpretation of the old term that can be found in certain classical text. Some Japanese scholars when tracing the source of the term quote the sentence from Chinese classic 史記 *History*: 敢犯顏色以達主義 *Gan-Fan-Yan-Se-Yi-Da-Zhu-Yi*. However, in this sentence *Zhu-Yi* does not mean “main meaning” or principle. It means the “honor of the master.” The original meaning of the sentence says: in order to serve the honor of the master, [I] have no choice but to offend him. And the re-interpretation or “abuse” of the sentence according to the modern meaning of the term *Zhu-Yi* will be: in order to defend my own belief, [I] have no choice but to offend the master.³¹ It is interesting how these two ways of reading also respectively correspond to the spirits of feudalism and individualism. This evolution of meaning of course is based on the polysemic nature of the Chinese characters themselves. 主 *Zhu* can mean “main” or “master” and 義 *Yi* can mean “honor” (justice) or “meaning.” As I emphasize, this polysemic nature of Chinese characters constitutes the space of trans-creative production and evolution of

Bitter Bamboo. Yu Lu Books. <日本衣食住>《苦竹雜記》。嶽麓書社。

³¹ See Wang, Bin-Bin. 王彬彬. 1999. “Japan in Between China and West – the Problem of Japanese “Loanwords” in Modern Chinese” in *Shang-Hai Literature: Guard the Soul*. <隔在中西之間的日本 – 現代漢語中的日語「外來語」問題>《上海文學》隨筆精品·第二輯·守望靈魂》.

translational neologisms.

The similar *evolution of meaning* of also happens in phonetic translational neologisms. Let us again return to Chinese linguist Hu Yi-Lu's discussion of phonetic translation for an example. Even though Hu suggested that significant translation was better in principle, he recognized the necessity of phonetic translation in some cases, including proper names and theoretical concepts.

The names in physics are most difficult to translate. ... It is not appropriate to translate 愛耐而幾 *Ai-Nai-Er-Ji* (energy) to 儲能 *Chu-Neng*, and translate 伊太 *Yi-Tai* (ether) to 清氣 *Qing-Qi* because them both add questionable adjectives to the terms. ... Philosophical terms are often untranslatable. For example, Buddhist term 般若 *Pan-Ruo* seems to mean wise but wise can not exhaust it. Aristotle's 奴斯 *Nu-Si* (nous) seems to mean 理 *Li* (reason) but reason can not exhaust it. While it might not be a problem that the translational term does not exhaust the meaning of the name for other fields, it was not acceptable for philosophy because the noun is the substance of philosophy and the polysemic nature is the function of philosophy.³²

Now more than a half century later many phonetic terms like 愛耐而幾 *Ai-Nai-Er-Ji* which consist of more than two characters have gone into oblivion. I believe one of the

<http://chbook.myetang.com/xiandai/swlh/002.htm>.

³² Hu, Yi-Lu. 胡以魯. 1940. "On Translational Names" in *Collection on Translation* edited by Huang Jie-De. Shang-Hai Books. <論翻譯>, 《翻譯論集》黃嘉德編。

reasons should be their lack of evolutionary space of meaning, that is their difficulty for readers to 望文生義 *Wang-Wen-Sheng-Yi* [look at the script (term) and produce the meaning] and 斷章取義 *Duan-Zhang-Qu-Yi* [take the meaning out of the full (con)text]. Now “energy” is usually translated to 能量 *Neng-Liang* [literally capacity-magnitude] while translation of “ether” usually remains phonetic *Yi-Tai* only that the character 伊 is replaced by 以. The simplicity of the two characters in 以太 *Yi-Tai* and the celestial connotation of 太 *Tai* suit the word “ether” well. It is true that the translational neologism often does not “exhaust” the meaning of the original term. But let us not slip into the pitfall of the theory of correspondence that assumes the original meaning is something out there which seeks a correct “representation” in the translation. Rather, as Walter Benjamin suggests, in any individual language the meaning is always in *constant state of flux*.³³ The translational neologism is like a “supplement” to the original term in its intention and meaning.

民國叢書第三編50. 上海書店。

³³ Benjamin, Walter. 1986. “The Task of the Translator” in *Illumination*. Edited by Hannah Arendt. Translated by Harry Zohn. New York: Schocken Books. P. 74.

Chapter 7 Conclusion: Writing as Technology of Worldling A Modern China

In Pai-Hua is hidden the ghost of feudal consciousness and the poison of implicit Imperialism. (Ni Lu, 1934)

Mortal speech is a calling that names, a bidding which, out of the simple onefold of the difference, bids thing and world to come. (Heidegger, 1971 : 208)

1. Rethinking the Grand Notion of Europeanization

In the previous chapter I discussed the translational practice of literal rendering of European syntax as an effort to “improve” Chinese syntax as well as the “Chinese brain”, which according to Lu Xun was “slapdash” and in need of radical transformation. I also pointed out that the Chinese translators generally overlooked the molecular nature of translation as a trans-creation of the language because they tended to refer back to the grand project of westernization or modernity when they attempted to articulate the necessity of literal translation. The grand notions they employed included the opposition between West and East, which tended to essentialize notions like “the” Chinese way of writing, reading, and thinking, “the” European Grammar, and “Europeanization.” In this concluding chapter I will rethink the grand notion of “Europeanization” itself, and the tendency of linguistic purification it involves. This discussion will clarify the notion of writing as the technology for worlding a new China,

which as I emphasize is characteristic of the Chinese project of modernity. This *linguistic modernity* will provide a different experience of modernity from the European model, and points to the historical specificity of Chinese postcoloniality.

As I emphasize, for the Chinese New Cultural generations a new written language as they envisioned it was the *technology of artificial evolution* that would help construct a new China to catch up with western “advanced” countries. This notion of language remains the central theme of linguistic reforms in modern China including Romanization, *Pai-Hua*, grammatical reform and translational practice of syntactical Europeanization. In this vision of new writing as a “sharp technology” of *worlding* a new China – that brings up new China as a world and brings the new China to the world -- the inflexive type of Indo-European alphabetical languages has always been the model. It remained so even in the “Mass Language movement” [大眾語運動 *Da Zhong Yu Yun Dong*] in 1934 which forcefully criticized the “elitist” tendency of syntactical Europeanization in *Pai-Hua* literature.

1934 is an important year for the reflection on New Cultural Movement (1910's-1920's). There was a debate about the feasibility of “complete westernization” and the necessity of Chinese “Self-Position” of cultural construction. The suggestion that we need a Chinese “Self-Position” to guide the project of cultural construction was generally attacked as an effort to restore the Chinese backward traditions, or a mere reformulation of the late Qing motif of “Chinese substance and Western function”, and part of the Restoration Movement [復古運動 *Fu Gu Yun Dong*]. However, as I pointed out in chapter 5, as a matter of fact both camps in the debate agreed that “westernization” was a necessity step for Chinese modernization, and their query was

about the definition of “Self-Position.” They were trapped in the binary opposition between “wholesale westernization” and “Chinese Self-Position”, because they overlooked the molecular nature of any cultural construction, including westernization itself. Westernization, like any other becomings, involves molecular transversality across heterogeneous cultural elements. The process of “becoming *western*” or rather becoming cosmopolitan, becoming the world, lies in the molecular trans-creation of a new culture, and especially a new written language, as I discussed in chapter 6.

The opposition between *Wen-Yan* and *Pai-Hua*, like any molar distinction, is in need of clarification if not deconstruction. First of all, it should be emphasized that the written language we now call “modern Chinese” is still in the making. But it is usually safe to say that modern Chinese is *Pai-Hua* and ancient or classical Chinese is *Wen-Yan*. I say “usually” because I want to stress the fact that the boundaries between modern and classical Chinese are not rigid and the *continuity* between them is no less important than their *discontinuity*. Perhaps even the opposition between continuity and discontinuity is a false one in this case. Let me clarify this point.

Although in terms of content (or intention), style and syntax, *Pai-Hua* has become very different from *Wen-Yan*, they are the same written language in terms of the basic morphological structure. As Yip Wai-Lim emphasizes in his criticism of *Pai-Hua* as a literary medium, its “excessive *discursiveness*” (containing too many analytical and explanatory elements) is not irreducible or irreversible.¹ It is so because these

¹ Yip, Wai-lim. 1970. “Introduction” for (tr. and ed.) *Modern Chinese Poetry: Twenty Poets From the Republic of China, 1955-1965*. Iowa: University of Iowa Press. Pp. xvii.

syntactical elements are not necessary for a Chinese sentence to be *grammatically* correct or complete. Breaking away from the restriction of the classical consciousness, styles and syntax, *Pai-Hua* has opened up a new and broader horizon of literary creation. However, I want to emphasize, the historical discontinuity of *Pai-Hua* as a literary medium made from *Wen-Yan* was mainly on the level of *intention*. Its syntactical “Europeanization” can be understood as part of this “modern intention”, the awareness or imagination that there is something called “modern” consciousness and its corresponding “modern” written language with “scientific” grammatical configuration. For the advocates of *Pai-Hua* literature the vice of *Wen-Yan* was in its embodiment of Chinese traditions, its anti-modernity, its anti-scientificity, and its unsurpassable distance from the “people” – since “people” as in democracy was understood as another inherent part of modernity along with science.

But *Pai-Hua* literature is not literature of the “people”, it is literature for *a people in the making* – a new Chinese people with modern consciousness. It is a diagnosis of the given Chinese people and the hope of a new people. Therefore, for faithful New Culturalists, any attempt to restore *Wen Yan* is dangerous not only in its particular linguistic form but more importantly in the “false consciousness” it carries and embodies. As I would like to suggest, it is this strong awareness of cultural-linguistic consciousness that presupposes an ideological inseparability between linguistic form and content and thereby stresses a supposedly radical discontinuity between *Pai-Hua* and *Wen-Yan*. It is true that this supposedly discontinuity allows new writers to construct a new and modern consciousness in their literary works. However, it also prevents them from recognizing the structural continuity of these two written media and

how *Wen-Yan* itself can in turn become a resource among others for new literary creation. That is to say they overlooked the molecular transversal nature of cultural-linguistic trans-creation which draws from “foreign” cultural and linguistic elements including the foreignness of *Wen-Yan* in relation to *Pai-Hua*.

In the next section I will discuss the Mass Language Movement in 1934 whose advocates set their minds to oppose both the “reactive” movement of *Wen-Yan* (classical) literature and the “elitist Europeanizing” tendencies in *Pai-Hua* (colloquial) literature. Generally speaking, the aim of the Mass Language movement is to achieve a “real” *Pai-Hua* literature or rather a “Mass Literature” that is based on a language of the “mass” and for the mass. Politically, this movement involved the divergent cultural policies of the Communist Party and the National Party at that time. However it is not the place to discuss the political issues involved. Here it suffices to point out that due to the strong communist connotation of the Mass Language movement, it has hardly been discussed in Taiwan which became the last base of National Party after 1949.

The focus of my discussion will be the criticism of “Europeanization” and “*New Wen-Yan*”, and how this criticism inevitably fell back to another grand project of “Mass Literature” which marked a communist turn of Chinese project of modernity. Again we will see the profound inseparability of any linguistic reform movement with the grand project of modernity in modern China. The euro-centric or Europeanized notion of “language” itself still guided the project of Mass literature even though its aim is a language spoken, written and understood by Chinese “mass.” As I emphasize, any holistic project of linguistic trans-creation inevitably fails because it always attempts to block the molecular transversal movement that cultural-linguistic trans-creation must

engage, which in this case involves a transformative appropriation of *Wen-Yan*, Europeanized and other foreign elements in *Pai-Hua* or modern Chinese.

2. Some Reflections on the Mass Language Movement: the Tendency of Linguistic Purification

In 1930 the Association of Chinese Leftist Writers [中國左翼作家聯盟 *Zhong Guo Zuo Yi Zuo Jia Lian Meng*] was established and one of its goals was “vulgarization of literature” 文藝大眾化 *Wen Yi Da Zhong Hua*. Here the English term vulgarization might be misleading because it is a pejorative which implies lacking refinement or cultivation while the Chinese term 大眾化 *Da-Zhong-Hua* simply means “become the mass” or “become the most people.” As such their job was not only to popularize the reading and reception of literature, but also to construct a kind of mass literature, both in terms of form and consciousness. Therefore, when education expert (of the National Party) Wang Mao-Zu suggested the teaching of *Wen-Yan* classics in elementary and middle schools, the leftist writers started a debate about the nature of *Wen-Yan* and *Pai-Hua*, and later proposed the construction of a “Mass Language.” Interestingly, in this debate, it was *Pai-Hua* literature that became the common target of criticism. Both camps of *Wen-Yan* and Mass Language criticized *Pai-Hua* literature in the past two decades but from different directions.

Wang Mao-Zu launched an ideological critique of *Pai-Hua* literature from a traditional moral point of view.

The content and style of Modern Chinese is the product of the New

Culture Movement whose goal was to extend individualism, destroy traditional teachings, attack authorities, and agitate struggles. Now the situation is even worse. It seeks only passion without any rational control. Young people who get used to this tendency become interested only in curious literary works and think scorn of traditional teachings about ritual, justice, honor, loyalty, obedience and benevolence. Meng Zi's critiquing of heresy as "flood and beast" is even more convincing today.²

Obviously what worried Wang was the *intention* of *Pai-Hua* literature and New Culture movement which according to him had resulted in the forgetting of Confucian teachings and traditional moral values, and the unbridled passion as dangerous as "flood and beast." Meng Zi (BC 372-289), the second master of Confucianism, criticized the teachings of Yang Zhu and Mo Zi that were fashionable at that time. Interestingly, Yang Zhu was the radical individualist and Mo Zi was a radical cosmopolitan. As I pointed out in chapter 5 *cosmopolitanism via individualism* was one of the official goals of *New Youth*, the pioneer magazine of the New Culture movement, as depicted in its founder Chen Du-Xiu's writing. Wang's evocation of Meng Zi's fear of radical individualism and cosmopolitanism pointed to the anti-Confucian values of the New Cultural movement. For Wang, the vice of *Pai-Hua* literature was its being a powerful carrier of these anti-traditional new values.

² Wang, Mao-Zu. 汪懋祖. 1934. "Banning *Wen Yan* and Reading the Classics" in *Public Opinion Weekly* N. 110. <禁習文言與強制讀經>《時代公論》周刊第一一〇號.

While cultural and moral conservatives attacked *Pai-Hua* literature for its destruction of old values, progressive intellectuals criticized *Pai-Hua* literature for its secret returning to *Wen-Yan*.

Mass language is against *Pai-Hua* because *Pai-Hua* movement has not completed its own mission and the unity of writing and speech. On the contrary, *Pai-Hua* has surrendered to *Wen-Yan* and become another obstacle to the progress of language and writing. Now the popular *Pai-Hua* literature is either awkward official speech [藍青官話 *Lan Qing Guan Hua*] or distorted new “eight-leg literature” [八股文 *Ba Gu Wen*] (so-called “quotation style”) which are distant from the mass. ... At this stage of the construction of Mass language, we only oppose *Pai-Hua*’s distance from the mass, but not the particular part of *Pai-Hua* which is close to Mass language.³

藍青官話 *Lan-Qing-Quan-Hua* “awkward official speech” originally referred to southern intellectuals’ strong accent when they speak northern official language (*Bei-Jing* dialect). Here it referred to some kind of writing which was half *Wen-Yan* and half *Pai-Hua*. 八股文 *Ba-Gu-Wen* “eight-leg literature” was a particular style required in the national examination in Ming and Qing periods. It then became the symbol and nickname for any oppressive traditions. In the Mass language movement, *Pai-Hua* literature was attacked to be a kind of new eight-leg literature or even *foreign* eight-leg

³ Jia-Wei. 家爲. 1934. “The Construction of Mass Literature” in *Sheng-Bao*. <再談建設大眾語文學> 《申報讀書問答》.

literature 洋八股 *Yang- Ba-Gu*. It was “foreign” because it involved Europeanized syntax along with the *Wen-Yan* elements. Analytically, syntactical Europeanization and the use of *Wen-Yan* terms were of two different directions. But both were criticized as turning away from the “mass.” There was something called Mass Language which was actually still in the making but had already become the standard employed to judge both “Europeanization” and “*Wen-Yan*ization”. Here we can see there were many contradictory elements coexistent in *Pai-Hua* literature. For instance, the “quotation style” referred to Lin Yu-Tang’s suggestion to refine or simplify the (Europeanized) syntax of *Pai-Hua*. And this simplification was in a sense syntactical *Wen-Yan*-ization, that is to de-Europeanize. The product, however, would not be *Wen-Yan* again, but would be something new and different from both old *Wen-Yan* and existing *Pai-Hua*. As I pointed out in chapter 6, Lin Yu-Tang was one of the main characters that opposed to the literal translation of European syntax. Indeed, he argued that any “good translation” should undergo a process of Nationalization in order to follow the “psychology of Chinese language.” As Lu Xun pointed out, Lin’s “quotation style” was actually a forceful attack on *Pai-Hua* literature rather than a proper example of *Pai-Hua*.

Another new power that attacks *Pai-Hua* is Mr. Lin Yu-Tang. Lin’s target is not *Pai-Hua*’s “incomprehensibility” but it “verbalization.” ... For him, the only expressive writing is the “quotation style” (*Wen-Yan* that is written in *Pai-Hua*) [白話的文言]

Bai Hua De Wen Yan].⁴

According to Lin Yu-Tang, the “quotation style” is “*Wen-Yan* that does not avoid slang, and *Pai-Hua* that uses *Zhi* and *Hu*.” [文言中不避俚語，白話中多放之乎].⁵ *Zhi* 之 and *Hu* 乎 are *Wen-Yan* terms used to indicate or transform the tone. For Lu Xun who was radically against any form of *Wen-Yan* as a literary medium and as an ideological carrier, the “quotation style” was merely “*Wen-Yan* that is written in *Pai-Hua*.” It was an attack on *Pai-Hua*. For the advocates of “Mass Language”, however, the “quotation style” became the hard proof that *Pai-Hua* had surrendered itself to *Wen-Yan*. As such, we see the boundaries of *Pai-Hua* literature were not fixed but partly dependent on its opponents’ or proponents’ definitions. In actual literary practices, the binary opposition between *Pai-Hua* and *Wen-Yan* is indeed too crude and not subtle and practical enough to discuss the trans-formative space of literary innovation.

In the 1930’s, after nearly two decades of *Pai-Hua* literature movement and a half century of westernization, modern Chinese had already incorporated a lot of “foreign” elements and created a certain degree of “hybridity” in terms of syntax and terminology, structurally and intentionally. As Lu Xun pointed out in his response to a reader calling him a “secret agent of western imperialism.”

I argue that some Europeanization of Chinese syntax is necessary.

⁴ Lu Xun. 鲁迅. 1934. “A Joke is a Joke” (2) in *Sheng Bao* 1934/7/26. <玩笑只當它玩笑>(下)《申報》「自由談」一九三四年七月二十六日。

⁵ See Lu Xun. 鲁迅. 1936. “Manage the Waters” in *Stories Edited*. Shang-Hai: Cultural

This argument is based on facts. It is true that Chinese people “at least know how to talk” but it is not enough to follow conventions if we want to move forward. The reader’s letter itself is the best example. In this short letter, which is composed of only one hundred characters, you used 對於 *Dui-Yu* [about] twice which has nothing to do with ancient Chinese but is a product of syntactical Europeanization. Even the term 歐化 *Ou-Hua* [Europeanization] itself is a Europeanized term. You also used the term 取消 *Qu-Xiao* [cancel] which is a purely Japanese term. You used 瓦斯 *Wa-Si* [gas] which is exactly the Japanese phonetic translation of the German term.⁶

This situation of linguistic hybridity is even more intense in today’s Chinese language due to the common translational practice that creates new terms based on literal rendering of European syntax, phonetic translation of European nouns, and the common borrowing from Japanese *Kanji* terms, as translation has become a necessary cultural practice. This recognition of linguistic *hybridity*, however, is not common in the linguistic reformative movements even though this situation of hybridity is based on common literary practices that necessarily move across different cultures in the age of globalization. On the contrary, the notion of *purity*, which has an intimate kinship with binary mode of thinking, seems to dominate the discourse of language reforms in

Lives. <理水>《故事新編》. 上海: 文化生活出版.

⁶ Lu Xun. 魯迅. 1934. “A Joke is a Joke” (1) in *Sheng Bao* 1934/7/25. <玩笑只當它玩笑>(上)《申報》「自由談」一九三四年七月二十五日。

modern China – “pure” Europeanization, “pure” anti-Chinese, “pure” *Pai-Hua*, “pure” anti-*Wen-Yan* and so on.

For many advocates of Mass language and mass literature, *Pai-Hua* literature was guilty of not being “pure” enough, and of bringing back the dead *Wen-Yan* in its literary practices. *Wen-Yan* became another name for *impurity-death* which insinuated itself into the domain of *Pai-Hua* literature.

If *Pai-Hua* literature of the May Fourth movement only peeled the *corpse of Chinese dead literature*, the Mass language movement aims to cremate the *corpse* and eradicate the *ghost* activities of new and old *Wen-Yan*.⁷ [italics added]

For them, *Pai-Hua* had become a kind of new *Wen-Yan*. For others, however, the real problem of *Pai-Hua* literature was not the use of *Wen-Yan* elements, but its Europeanization and the use of “unusual” terms.

Perhaps the new *Wen-Yan* is not so incomprehensible – as long as we *clean up* the Europeanized syntax, Japanese syntax, and any abstract nouns which are unusual in *everyday speech*, and *Wen-Yan* adjectives.⁸ [italics added]

There are two points to note in the above two quotes. The first is the metaphor of death.

⁷ Wen Xin. 聞心. 1934. “Several Questions about the Mass Language Movement” in Wen Yi ed. 1934. *Current Debate about Language*. Shang-Hai: Shang-Hai Books. <大眾語運動的幾個問題>《語文論戰的現階段》, 民國叢書第一編62.上海書店。

⁸ See Wen Yi. 文逸. 1934. “Introduction” for Wen Yi (ed.) 文逸編. 1934. *Current Debate about Language*. Shang-Hai: Shang-Hai Books. 《語文論戰的現階段》, 民國叢書第一編62.上海書店。P.39.

Here the *dead/living* opposition is to return to the hierarchical opposition between writing and speech. Europeanized syntax was also put on the dead side because it was defined as a written form that was distant from speech. In modern western philosophy of language, this hierarchical opposition between speech and writing can be traced back to Hegel. As I elaborated in chapter 3, Hegel believes that only through the *mediation of speech* can a writing system achieve precision and be able to catch up with the lively dialectical movement of spirit. He insists that hieroglyphics is a “deaf reading” and a “dumb writing.” This Hegelian alphabetic prejudice was shared by Chinese New Culturalists. At the beginning of *Pai-Hua* literature movement which officially started in 1919, *Pai-Hua* was believed to be closer to everyday living speech than *Wen-Yan* which was believed to be dead writing. Now in 1934, *Pai-Hua* was said to have sneaked from the end of “living speech” to that of “dead writing.” It was criticized for becoming a kind of “new *Wen-Yan*” or “foreign” eight-leg literature that was a disgusting *hybrid* made of *dead* *Wen-Yan* elements and *foreign* Europeanized syntax and *abstract* notions (often born from something *foreign*). This kind of linguistic and cultural *hybrid* was criticized for its distance from the “living language” of the Chinese mass.

Therefore, as one can see from the above analysis, the intention of *linguistic purification* was a tendency lurking underlying the construction of a “Mass Language.” Of course, purification is a tendency rather than the main goal of the movement. But the tendency of linguistic purification became explicit when the goal of Mass Language itself was purified – that is when the “needs of mass people” became the sole standard of good literature. In order to clarify this point, let us look at the definition of Mass Language and its difference from the actual situation of the languages of the mass of the

Chinese people.

According to linguist, the first Chinese translator of Marx's *Communist Manifesto*, Chen Wang-Dao, Mass Language referred to literature that "mass people are able to speak, understand when they hear it, write smoothly, and comprehend when they read it." Another linguist Hu Yu-Zhi said Mass language is "the language that represents the consciousness of mass people."⁹ Here the problem of *social classes* played a crucial part. *Pai-Hua* literally means "plain speech", that points to its original intention to overturn classic writing which is distant from everyday speech. As matter of fact, the above definitions of Mass Language were similar to the original intention of *Pai-Hua* – *the unity of writing and speech*. Therefore, in 1934 Chen Wang-Dao invited noted writers Xu Lun and Mao Dun to establish a new literary journal called *Tai-Bai*, literally meaning "too plain."

Tai-Bai means to be plainer than the plain. It means to be plainer than *Pai-Hua*.¹⁰

Or as Gao Huang asserted Mass Language would involve an 奧伏赫變 *Ao-Fu-He-Bian* [*Aufhebung*] of *Pai-Hua*.¹¹ Supposedly the plain-ness of Mass literature would, on the one hand, grant the people of lower social classes, or the proletarian, the access to

⁹ In Wen Yi (ed.) 文逸編. 1934. *Current Debate about Language*. Shang-Hai: Shang-Hai Books. 《語文論戰的現階段》, 民國叢書第一編62.上海書店。P.49.

¹⁰ See Mao Dun. 茅盾. 1984. *The Road I Have Come*. Ren-Min Publisher. 《我走過的道路》. 人民出版社.

¹¹ Gao, Huang. 高荒. 1934. "From anti-*Wen-Yan* to the Construction of Mass Language" in *Chinese Daily* 1934/7/15. <由反對文言文到建設大眾語> 《中華

progressive literature and thought; on the other hand, it would be able to “represent the consciousness of mass people.” Since as Chen Wang-Dao asserted Mass Language was what “mass people are able to speak, understand when they hear it, write smoothly, and comprehend when they read it”, the first problem they had to deal with was the great variety of Chinese dialectics. This problematic led to the return of the suggestion of Romanization. As I discussed in chapter 3, Romanization movement or the attempt to create a Chinese alphabet can be traced back to the late Qing period. For Chinese language reformers the European model of alphabetical writing was the actual realization of the unity of speech and writing. In the face of the contradiction between the variety of Chinese dialectics and the ideal of united National Language, Romanization was a reasonable solution that the advocates of Mass Language came up with.

In 1934 the editor of *Social Monthly* Cao Ju-Ren wrote a public letter to the readers, asking for opinions about Mass language. The following five questions generally reflected the basic problematic of the movement.

Firstly, the Mass Language movement is of course an heir of *Pai-Hua* literature movement and National Language movement. The question therefore is: is it now really necessary to start a new stage called the construction of Mass Language? Secondly, why did *Pai-Hua* literature movement become stagnant? Why do the new literati (literati after

日報》一九三四年七月十五日。

May Fourth) show the tendency to classical restoration? Thirdly, *Pai-Hua* has become a monopolized tool of the special class (intellectuals) and lost the relevance to general public. How do we make *Pai-Hua* a tool for mass people? Fourthly, in the process of constructing a Mass Language, should we start with a standard National Language and gradually annihilate dialectics? Or should we start with the variety of dialectics and construct the variety of Mass languages, then gradually lead to a united National Language? Fifthly, what methods do we use to write Mass literature? How do we select and choose among the methods used by common people?¹²

The above quote shows the complicated relationship among *Pai-Hua*, *Wen-Yan*, local dialectics, National Language, and Mass Language. It also shows the overlapping and distinct directions of *Pai-Hua* literature movement, National Language movement, Romanization movement, and Mass Language movement. The relationship of these languages could not have been a linear development. All these movements together constitute a “map” of modern Chinese language reform, which includes different literary practices, which sometimes are contradictory with each other. More importantly, “Mass Language” itself, as the “standard” that the Mass Language movement used to judge and criticize *Pai-Hua* and other literary practices, was not a real entity but a virtual goal that did not refer to any existing languages. Mass Language as a virtual goal was nevertheless often used to serve the lurking intention of *linguistic purification* and

¹² Cao Ju-Ren. 曹聚仁. 1934. “A Public Letter from the Editor” in *Social Monthly*.

easily led to discursive cul-de-sacs like “pure” *Pai-Hua*, “pure” anti-*Wen-Yan*, “pure” Europeanization, and “pure” anti-Chinese-characters. Therefore, as a natural discursive result of this intention of linguistic purification, regarding these questions, famous novelist Lu Xun wrote a public letter to Cao and suggested that the final solution would be Romanization *and* total abolition of Chinese characters.

Chinese characters and the mass are like water and oil. ... The things we can do include: (1). Establish a Romanization alphabet. ... (2). Write plainer *Pai-Hua* literature, and adopt common idioms as a way to construct Mass Language. It of course should express “progressive” thought. (3). Continue to support Europeanized grammar as a backup.¹³

Therefore, the discussion of the Mass Language movement gradually referred back to a radical critique of Chinese characters, showing a discursive continuity with New Culturalists’ critique of Chinese writing system in the 1910’s. The final proposal was “Romanization of writing” 書法拉丁化 *Shu-Fa-La-Ding-Hua*, which finally led to the establishment of the 漢語拼音 *Han Yu Pin Yin* system in 1958.¹⁴

7/25/1934. <編者信> 《社會月刊》.

¹³ Lu Xun. 魯迅. 1934. “In Response to Mr. Cao” in *Social Monthly* 1934/8. <答曹聚仁先生信> 《社會月刊》第一卷第三期.

¹⁴ Ye, Lai-Shi. 葉賴士. 1934. “My Rejection of *Han Zi* Fetishism as A Proponent of Latinization” in Wen Yi (ed.) 1934. *Current Debate about Language*. Shang-Hai: Shang-Hai Books. <一個拉丁化論者對於漢字拜物教主義者的駁斥>，收錄於文逸編《語文論戰的現階段》，民國叢書第一編62.上海書店。

3. *The Sociological Postcolonial Situation of Chinese Linguistic Modernity*

As we see in the above discussion, the debate of Mass Language movement ended with a discursive return to New Culturalists' radical proposal of abolishing the Chinese writing system, and the invention of a Chinese alphabet. Although the proposal of abolishing Chinese characters was aborted after all, the ideology that Chinese writing system is unscientific and inferior seems to be rooted in Chinese modern consciousness.

As I argue, the reason for this either/or argument is the molar mode of thinking that has dominated Chinese intellectuals' imagination of modernity, as we see in the obstinate binary opposition between Western Culture and Chinese Culture, and the corresponding opposition between alphabetic writing and Chinese "hieroglyphic" writing. Even though the actual literary and translational practices often involves molecular discursive movement which transverses the molar binaries, the molar way of thinking still predominates in the explicit discourse of Chinese linguistic modernity as a project of artificial evolution.

Many scholars have pointed out the prominence of the problem of written language in the Chinese imagination of modernity. The analysis of this language-centered imagination of modernity often focuses on the content and consciousness of Chinese modern literature. For example, Lydia Liu's analysis of the notion of nationality in Lu Xun's novels points out how some translated loan terms transformed the sensibilities of Chinese language.¹⁵ However, seldom have scholars investigated the discourse of

¹⁵ See Liu, H. Lydia. 1995. *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and*

Chinese language reform itself as a project of modernity, and how this grand discourse itself has obscured the molecular transversality of the actual discursive practices involved in literary and translational works, as I present in this study. Since the New Culture movement in the 1910's, the ideal of New Writing – in terms of content and form, especially a new written medium, preferably *alphabetic* writing – has been in the center of the construction of a new and better, that is a *modern*, Chinese people with a new Chinese mind which is able to perform scientific and modern thinking, and thereby create a new and better Chinese nation. In other words, this new language has been seen as a technology of writing Chinese modernity. Indeed, this project of modernity can be understood as a form of *linguistic modernity*, which tends to reduce the notion of modernity to the problem of language. Nevertheless, as I emphasize, this linguistic reduction is based on a historically specific sociological situation and should not to be simply dismissed as some kind of cultural idealism. This sociological situation is what we usually call the postcolonial situation which gives Chinese intellectuals a *dual positionality* inherent to their imagination of modernity, as I pointed out in the introduction chapter of this study.

My point that the postcolonial situation is a sociological situation is not to reduce the notion of postcolonial studies to the discipline called sociology. The historical contingency of academic disciplines should always be borne in mind. For a non-western student of sociology like me, it is hardly beyond dispute that sociology as a discipline was and is still based on a eurocentric model of modernity which is conceptually

Translated Modernity China, 1900-1937. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
Chapter 2.

inseparably from the European experience of capitalism. The emergence of “regional studies” in the past few decades by no means changes this fact. Sociological theory of modernity is inseparable from the continuous development of capitalism. The studies of non-western societies’ modernity has been focused either on their process of modernization as we see in development theory, or on the growth or construction of modern consciousness as we see in popular culture studies or literary studies. For example, the search for sociological equivalents of “the conditions of capitalism” was once a major issue in Chinese sociology. One of the most famous examples is the theory of “Confucian capitalism” as an academic effort to stress that the Weberian “spirit of capitalism” could also be found in East Asian Confucianism.¹⁶ However, any search for the sociological equivalents of European modernity in other “regions” not only presupposes the given sociological theoretical framework based on the experience of the “center”, but also premises the applicability of this specific framework to the “region.” The postcolonial situation of modernity, on the other hand, points to an irreducible character of the non-western project of modernity, that it was often instigated by *a violent historical discontinuity* caused by the fatal encounter with western imperialism. If sociology is a theory about *modern* society, the postcolonial situation marks an irreducible *initial* sociological situation of non-western *modern* societies. In other words, epistemic violence is an inherent part of the non-western project(s) of modernity.

This *initial* sociological situation of postcoloniality explains the emergence of

¹⁶ See Tu, Wei-Ming. (ed.) . 1996. *Confucian Traditions in East Asian Modernity: Moral Education & Economic Culture in Japan & the Four Mini-Dragons*. Harvard: Harvard University Press.

Chinese linguistic modernity. The intimate relation of Chinese postcoloniality with its specific linguistic modernity can be attributed to the following conditions. First of all, the postcolonial epistemic violence necessarily led to the increasing growth of a *translational space* between Chinese and European linguistic circles. As I pointed out in chapter 2, with the Foreign Affair Movement 洋務運動 *Yang Wu Yun Dong* (1860-1894), the first official systematic project of modernity, the “Capital Common Language School” [京師同文館] was established in 1862 and dedicated to the translation of western works, mostly technical or industrial works. Later in about 1895 social reformers began to establish many other publishers dedicating to a broader translation and introduction of western thought in general. From the very beginning, translation is an inherent part of the construction of Chinese modernity. Moreover, the translation of western thought involves more than a straight “introduction” of western ideas into Chinese. It involves a process of transformation which not only happens in the linguistic translation of western works, but also in the creative-transformation of Chinese as the target language, as I discussed in chapter 6. This creative-transformation of Chinese language itself is intensified by the radical structural differences between the source language and the target language.

The second condition for the prominence of linguistic modernity in Chinese postcoloniality is the great difficulty translators faced when translating from European inflexive type of alphabetic writing into Chinese figurative-phonetic writing. It punctuates the radical structural differences between these two linguistic systems, not only in terms of grammatical configuration, but also in terms of the basic structure of the alphabetic “word” versus Chinese “characters”. As I pointed out in chapter 6, the

translation of syntax and the translation of words are two separate and yet closely related tasks the translator has to struggle with. The opposition between *Zhi-Yi* (straight translation) and *Yi-Yi* (interpretive translation) is mainly about the problem of *translating the grammar*, while the invention of neologisms is about the translation of nouns. For the Chinese project of linguistic modernity, the translation of grammar is particular important because a “precise grammar” is discursively connected to the theme of scientific thinking. Therefore, in the early discussion about “straight translation,” the literal rendering of European syntax/grammar was seen as a beneficial extension of the boundaries of Chinese written language, even though its immediate product was often incomprehensible composition. For many New Culturalists who themselves were active translators, like Lu Xun, (European) grammatical order guides the structure of texts and the logic of thought. For them, linguistic Europeanization, like cultural and societal westernization, is of out necessity, not of curiosity, to use Lu Xun’s expression.

Therefore, related to the strong discursive connection between the precise (European) grammar and “scientificity”, which is a key ideal for the Chinese imagination of modernity, the third condition of Chinese linguistic modernity is the notion of language as technology of evolution. As I discussed in chapter 2, for New Culturalists, what late Qing officials-literati called Western Léarning, including western “material civilization”, laws and alphabetic writing, were *universal technology of evolution* which China needed to adopt in order to catch up with the west in the “line of evolution.” Indeed, linear social evolutionism was quite fashionable in the nineteen century and remained so in early twentieth century. For example, English Anthropologist Edward Tylor’s cultural evolutionism maintains that culture evolved

from the simple to the complex, and that all societies passed through the three basic stages of development suggested by Montesquieu, which were savagery, barbarism and civilization.¹⁷ According to this view, every contemporary society is at a different stage of development, and the lower societies will necessarily evolve to the higher form. Modernization theory of the 1950s and 60s is another example. Indeed, evolutionary theory is an inherent theme of sociology from the very beginning. The works of Comte, Spencer, Durkheim, and Marx all present some kind of evolutionary development of human society. Actually, the Chinese notion of evolution, 進化 *Jin Huan* or 演化 *Yan Hua*, has an intimate kinship to sociological notion of evolution. Chinese intellectuals came into contact with the notion of evolution through Yan Fu's translation of Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics* and Herbert Spencer's *The Study of Sociology*. Yan Fu translated "sociology" into 群學 *Qun Xue* [The Study of Group, or Collectivity], and believed that the notion of *Qun* (collectivity) would help China develop a healthy sense of nationalism. He translated *Evolution and Ethics* into Chinese as *Tianyan Lun* 天演論 (*On Heavenly Evolution*)(1895-6). In his interpretation, the order of "natural evolution" is superimposed by a higher order of a "heavenly evolution" as an ultimate constancy, which combined the two notions of competitive struggle and natural selection.¹⁸

¹⁷ Edward. Tylor. 1964. [1865]. *Researches into the Early History of Mankind and the Development of Civilization*. Paul Bohannan. ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

¹⁸ See Wang, Hui. 1997. "The Fate of 'Mr. Science' in China: The Concept of Science and Its Application in Modern Chinese Thought" in *Formations of Colonial Modernity in East Asia* ed. by Tanie Barlow. Pp, 21-79. Duke University Press. Pp, 43-44.

Therefore, worlding a modern China was a project of *artificial collective evolution* ordained *heaven*. The “artificiality” of this evolutionary project not only was manifest in the reformative effort, but more significantly in the historical specific postcoloniality that Chinese intellectuals had to face. For them, western technology, including alphabetic language, was at the same time the great product of western evolution, and the most efficient instrument that “backward” non-western societies like China could employ to enhance their path of evolution.

The growth of translational space, the discursive connection between European grammar and scientificity, and the notion of language as technology of evolution, as the three conditions of Chinese linguistic modernity, all point to a specific form of epistemic violence which marks the radical structural differences between European and Chinese writing systems. This specific form of epistemic violence is *phonocentrism*. Phonocentrism is an inherent part of what Derrida calls the western metaphysics of presence, which privileges “living” speech over “dead” writing, and therefore also privileges phonological (alphabetic) writing over other systems which rely more on the visual part of writing. According to Derrida, phonocentrism is intimately related to logocentrism because in western metaphysics of presence *phoné* as inner voice is seen as immediate and interior as the living movement reason. As I discussed in chapter 3, this phonocentrism led to the mode of thinking I have called the “alphabetic prejudice” which not only marked western philosopher Hegel’s notion of writing, but also was held by Chinese intellectuals in the early twentieth century as the basic principle of language reform. As such, phonocentrism as a specific form of epistemic violence was at the core

of the Chinese project of radical westernization. The Chinese project of linguistic modernity in the early twentieth century, if only in a twisted sense, grasped the kernel of western metaphysics as Derrida defines it.

Here I must ask the crucial question: Is there a *difference* between phonocentrism as the western metaphysical closure and phonocentrism as the postcolonial epistemic violence? There *must* be a difference if the so-called (post-)colonial modernity was *not* a mere “repetition” of European project of modernity. Indeed, as I constantly stress in this study, as a strenuous effort of “artificial evolution”, Chinese project of linguistic modernity was a “repetition” producing a significant “difference.” What was this difference? The answer to this question will show the creative-transformation involved in the postcolonial reconfiguration of “western culture”, and help deconstruct the arche-opposition between West and East. I believe by putting Derrida’s deconstruction of western metaphysics in the postcolonial context, we can begin to clarify the discursive and historical relationship between the *epistémé* we know as “western metaphysics” and the epistemic violence we find in various postcolonial projects of modernity enacted by westernized non-western intellectuals. The experience of Chinese linguistic modernity, given its phonocentric accent, is an exemplary case, which with appropriate analysis will provide some important resources for a postcolonial deconstruction of western metaphysics and the very notion of “western culture.” This deconstruction is not straightforward and must be achieved by a melocular discursive analysis that in its attention to actual discursive practices deconstructs the apparent oppositional framework of the discursive field. And such has been the purpose of my study.

4. The Theoretical Significance of Chinese Linguistic Modernity, and the Deconstruction of “Western Culture”

As I emphasize in chapter 1, the discourse of Chinese multi-dimensional literary reform is not a coherent system, but a Foucauldian “discontinuous discourse”, discursive practice which is not a product of any individual author, but is “a body of anonymous, historical rules, always determined in the time and space that have defined a given period, and for a given social, economic, geographical, or linguistic areas, the conditions of operation of the enunciative function.”¹⁹ That is to say, it belongs to an impersonal discursive field which should not be reduced to any individual geniuses or particular great thinkers. In this study, I point out that the historical rules of the discourse of Chinese language reform must be relocated in the discursive field of New Culture, as I discussed in chapters 1 and 2. This discursive field was characteristic of a dualistic framework whose discursive movement was marked by a continuous *displacement of hierarchical oppositions*. It moved from the old oppositions between substance and function, or culture and technics, to those between Western culture and Chinese culture, westernization and cultural authenticity, phonetic writing and non-phonetic writing, and scientific or non-scientific. In each displacement, a certain shift of subject-position often was involved and yet often remained unarticulated. This shifting subject-positionality at the same time complicated and enriched the postcolonial “repetition” of western logocentrism/phonocentrism, because it involved a movement within a *broad* cultural and linguistic horizon which already crossed the boundaries

¹⁹ See Foucault, Michel. 1972. *The Archaeology of Knowledge and The Discourse of*

between West and East. On the other hand, however, the postcolonial version of phonocentrism was *intensified* through a conscious intention of artificial evolution. Therefore, there is *an intensified version of phonocentrism in a boundary-crossing horizon, evolving with the movement of Chinese linguistic modernity*.

As I point out in the above sections, it is the specific postcolonial epistemic violence of phonocentrism that *initiated*, although not determined, the particular conditions of Chinese linguistic modernity. The mode of European phonological writing became the ideal of scientific, modern writing, which was seen as simultaneously a historical result of European evolution and a universal technology of evolution for non-European countries to adopt. This specific form of phonocentrism in Chinese postcoloniality was like a radical displaced cousin of the phonocentrism in the western metaphysics of presence. In this form of postcolonial phonocentrism, the hierarchical binary of speech and writing was displaced into the narrower hierarchical binary of European alphabetic writing and Chinese “hieroglyphic” writing, in which alphabetic writing was elevated to the status of *the* rational and scientific writing, the only literary technology of evolution that was effective. Nevertheless, the initial condition evolved with the movement. The repetition of western metaphysical opposition between speech and writing also produced a *difference*. This difference manifested itself in those molecular discursive practices, which already went beyond the oppositional framework of the grand project of modernity or westernization. My study suggests that this difference was about the situation of *cultural and linguistic hybridity* resulted from the

Language. New York: Pantheon Books. P. 117.

molecular translational practices. Here the term “hybridity” needs a qualification. Unlike Homi Bhabha’s “act of hybridity” which made the colonial dominate discourse to “split”, and disturbed the presences of authority through a “colonial doubling” or a “strategic displacement of values”, the linguistic hybridity of modern Chinese was not about the metonymic strategy or the desire of “mimicry.”²⁰ Rather than a hybrid “subjectivity”, the situation of hybridity produced in Chinese linguistic modernity was about the creative-transformation of a written language *in use*, as opposing to the proposed purity of linguistic revolution. While the apparent framework of the grand discourse of Chinese linguistic modernity remained molar and binary, many actual discursive practices are *molecular* in nature. These molecular literary and translational practices already began to transcend or transverse the apparent binary oppositions like westernization vs. cultural authenticity, European Culture vs. Chinese Culture, *Wen-Yan* vs. *Pai-Hua*, (grammatical) Europeanization vs. Nationalization, and alphabetic vs. hieroglyphic writings, as I pointed out in chapter 6 and this chapter.

This contradiction between the obstinate apparent binary discursive framework and the dynamic actual molecular discursive movement can be compared to the Heideggerian contradiction between modern technology as Emframing (ordering) and the nature of technology as the bring-forth of new beings; in other words, the contradiction between a reified framework and dynamic movement. In “The Question Concerning Technology,” Heidegger asserts that the essence of technology can be found in the Greek notion of *techné* as a mode of revealing (the truth), or rather a

²⁰ See Bhabha, Homi K. 1994. “Signs Taken For Wonders” in *The Location of Culture*.

bringing-forth (of Being, and new beings).²¹ The modern technology, technology in the narrow sense, on the contrary, has been restricted to the practice of ordering, or *Ge-Stell* (Enframing), exclusively as standing-reserves to be commanded. And more importantly, this restricted mode of ordering revealing tends to not only conceal other modes of revealing (as in artwork, painting, music, literature and poetry and etc.), but also conceal the very mode of revealing as a *bringing-forth*, or *poësis*.²² That is to say, modern technology in the narrow sense blocks the essence of technology – bringing forth new beings. Likewise, the obstinate apparent binary discursive framework we see in the grand discourse of Chinese linguistic modernity, as well as other grand discourses, always tends to block the dynamic molecular movement of actual discursive practices. And it is these molecular transversal practices that constitute the actuality and matter of the discontinuous discourse, and more importantly, it is these practices rather than the apparent oppositions that will tell us the directionality and future of the discursive strategies moving forwards.

Turning back to Chinese “repetition” of western phonocentrism in the project of linguistic modernity, what does the notion of “writing” as a *technology of artificial evolution* in the historically specific situation tell us about the nature of “postcolonial culture”? What does it tell us about the infamous notion of “western culture” which has

New York: Routledge. Pp. 102-122.

²¹ See Heidegger, Martin. 1970. *Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*. NY: Harper and Row. P, 13.

²² Heidegger, Martin. 1970. Pp, 19-20; 27.

almost everywhere explicitly or implicitly held up as a model of a “new cultural”? Writing as a technology of artificial evolution, as I depicted in Chinese linguistic modernity, already showed that the notion “western culture” was “artificial” and *non-western* in nature, and that in the postcolonial situation “western culture” itself was constituted in the process of “westernization” of a “non-western” culture. But it was more than a problem of conceptual/cultural construction. It involved a “substantial” movement of enclosure and disclosure, the differentiation of the self and the other, as we see in the articulation of a “New Culture” through the constant negotiation about the boundaries between “Western culture” and “Chinese culture”, and in the transformative horizon of modern Chinese written language. In a sense, writing as a technology of artificial evolution is closer to Derridean arche-writing as the opening of an “outside”, that is, as *différance*, than it is to writing in the literal sense. Or in other words, the movement Derrida has called *différance* acquired a postcolonial accent in the experience of Chinese linguistic modernity.

To put Derrida’s deconstruction of western metaphysic and his project of grammatology in the postcolonial context, the first thing to ask is how does this particular western project of self-critique connect to a nonwestern project like Chinese linguistic modernity? Besides the fact that the latter was a creative “repetition” of western phonocentrism – the object of Derrida’s deconstruction – the notion of writing as technology in this specific postcolonial context, as I want to argue in the following discussion, also provides another perspective to reassess the supposed supplementarity and technicity of writing, which Derrida identified as the doctrine of western logocentrism.

In the following passage Derrida summarizes Rousseau's reproach of writing as an "unnatural" evil supplement to "natural" speech.

When Nature, as self-proximity, comes to be forbidden or interrupted, when speech fails to protect presence, writing becomes necessary. It must be *added* to the word urgently. I have identified in advance one of the forms of this *addition*; speech being natural or at least the natural expression of thought, the most natural form of institution or convention for signifying thought, writing is added to it, is adjoined, as an image or representation. In that sense, it is not natural. It diverts the immediate presence of thought to speech into representation and the imagination. This resource is not only "bizarre," but dangerous. It is the addition of a technique, a sort of artificial and artful ruse to make speech present when it is actually absent. It is violence done to the natural destiny of the language.²³ [italics original]

In this discourse which can be traced back to Plato, writing (in the literal sense) is an image. It is the violent and dangerous addition of a *technique*, a sort of *artificial* and *artful* ruse to make speech present when it is actually absent. That is to say, compared to speech, which is "immediate" and "natural" expression of thought – *phoné* as immediate expression of *logo* -- writing is by definition a supplementarity, a kind of "artificial" technology which is at the same necessary and evil, progressive and

²³ Derrida, Jacques. 1974. *Of Grammatology*. Translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. The John Hopkins University Press. P.144.

degeneration. As such, writing occupies a crucial but contradictory place in “history.”²⁴ On the one hand, it indicates man’s rise above nature; it means “history”, “culture” and “civilization.” On the other hand, it marks the beginning of man’s degradation; it everywhere runs the danger of “formalism”, “stagnation” and “death.” As I pointed out in chapter 3, it is this danger of spiritual death that Hegel accused Chinese script of, and that Hegel believed alphabetical writing had overcome through a dialectical mediation of speech. Alphabetical writing as writing returning back to speech, or the dialectical synthesis of writing and speech, was therefore *the* only system of writing that could *evolve* with the real movement of Spirit, and that guarded the advanced progress of European history compared to oriental history. As such, (alphabetic) writing as an “unnatural” supplementarity to (European) “nature” is indeed a “technology” of (European) human evolution, which not only marks a difference from “other” nature, but also *writes* a difference from “other” cultures. On the other hand, however, a system like Chinese “nonphonetic” writing would seem to be the exemplary case of a civilization of “formalism”, “stagnation” and “death.” It was still “history”, only that it is a nearly dead one, which was trapped in its formalistic game of images and lost touch with the movement of Reason. Is it surprising at all that Chinese New Culturalists’ critique of Chinese writing unwittingly echoed this Hegelian accusation, considering European historicity, its idea of “history”, had proved its victory through global capitalism/colonialism/imperialism?

²⁴ As Derrida says: “From the first departure from nature, the play of history – as supplementarity – carries within itself the principle of its own degradation.” (Ibid., P.179)

As I argue in this study, the notion of writing as the technology of artificial evolution was the core of Chinese project of linguistic modernity. Through the selective appropriation of “western culture” – including laws, political system, science, philosophy, and especially alphabetic writing system itself – and thereby the construction of a “Chinese (new) culture” centered at a becoming modern of Chinese written language, it aimed at *worlding* a modern China, that was to bring up China to the stage of World (Western) History. This project of *writing* a new China was not only manifest in the nation-building Chinese literature, as many scholars have pointed out, but perhaps more fundamentally, as I emphasize in this study, in the transformation of the Chinese writing system itself as a whole, especially in terms of phoneticization and grammar.

While some scholars have reproached this “instrumentalist” notion of culture in Chinese New Culture movement for simplifying and reducing the nuances of cultural creation to an instrument of national survival,²⁵ I argue that this seemingly “instrumentalist” approach to culture and “writing”, far from being a mere desire of becoming the master, resulted from a condensation effect of postcolonial epistemic violence. If I say the Chinese project of linguistic modernity is in a sense *logocentric*, I am not suggesting that Chinese New Culturalist intellectuals had merely taken in the western logocentrism. Rather I am suggesting that through the practices of Chinese linguistic modernity, logocentrism in its western sense acquired a broader horizon, and

²⁵ For example, see Lin Yu-Sheng. 1979. *The Crisis of Chinese Consciousness: Radical Antitraditionalism in the May Fourth Era*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.

its western “origin” itself became a problem. The attempt to find the Chinese “equivalent” for western something has been a peculiar career in modern China – for some examples of pertinence, the 西學中源說 *Xi Xue Chong Yuan Shuo* in the Qing period that sarcastically argued the *origin* of western learning must be found in China (see discussion in chapter 2), the disappointing search for Chinese “equivalent” of the verb “to be” (see discussion in chapter 4), and more recently, the controversial search for Chinese *logo* in the notion of *Dao* (*Tao*).²⁶ Like Spivak’s critique of Derrida’s “ethnocentric” suggestion that “logocentrism is the property of the west”²⁷, however, this kind of universalistic attempt which tried to prove that what can be found in western culture can also be found in other cultures tells us little, if anything, about the *operation* of logocentrism or phonocentrism as a specific form of postcolonial epistemic violence. The dynamic molecular movement of Chinese linguistic modernity was an example of such operation.

²⁶ See Zhang, Longxi. 1992. *The Tao and the Logos: Literary Hermeneutics, East and West*. Duke University Press. While Zhang Longxi interprets the “unname-ness” of *Dao* (*Tao*) as a “debasement of writing” similar to the Western metaphysics, James Liu suggests we understand it as a (meta-)poetics of paradox. (Liu, James J. Y. 1988. *Language-Paradox-Poetics: A Chinese Perspective*. Edited by Richard John Lynn. Princeton University Press.) On the other hand, Yip Wai-lim argues one should take the Taoist aesthetics to a higher level than language or poetics. Almost on an ontological level, Yip writes: “to the Taoist ... the phenomenal is the noumenal.” (Yip, Wai-Lim. 1993. *Diffusion of Distances: Dialogues between Chinese and Western Poetics*. University of California Press.) Either way, unlike the notion of *logo* in western metaphysics, the notion of a transcendental God, or abstract Reason, play no role here in the horizon of *Tao*. Here I want to suggest that the semantic horizon of *Dao* can not be reduced to thinking or speaking as Zhang Longxi suggests. This reduction already presupposes a thinking or speaking subjectivity.

²⁷ Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 1974. “Translator’s Preface” for Derrida, Jacques. 1974. *Of Grammatology*. The John Hopkins University Press. P. lxxxli.

To further clarify this point, I believe, it is necessary to deconstruct the distinction between “arche-writing” and “writing in the vulgar sense.” This distinction itself is based on the metaphysical debasement of writing in general, and the *erasure* of “arche-writing” as trace and *différance* in writing in the vulgar sense. As I emphasize above, the notion of writing as technology of artificial evolution and worlding a modern China is in a sense *closer* to arche-writing. Now I want to rephrase this assertion. (Chinese) New Writing as technology of (Chinese) artificial evolution (in the postcolonial situation) not only accentuated writing in general as *différance*, that is the movement of repetition and difference, but also translated it into something concrete, the whole project of Chinese writing reform.

In his discussion of *différance*, Derrida draws on many figures whose works like his own mark a critique of western metaphysics from within. *Différance* is the Nietzschean “eternal return” as the movement of “difference and repetition” and it is the Freudian “deferred effect” which is not only about the economy of pleasure, but more importantly about a forever “loss” of an impossible presence that has never been. The irreducibility of absolute alterity [the Other] indicates the impossibility of a dialectical synthesis which presupposes a “living presence” as the originary synthesis. [And therefore the impossibility of Hegelian dialectical synthesis of speech and writing in the ideal of “pure” phonetic alphabetic writing.] It also indicates, as Derrida further suggests, the impossibility of ontology – the ontology of presence, which is “the ontology of beings and beingness.”²⁸ To clarify the irreducible difference in the very

²⁸ Derrida, Jacques. 1982. “Différance” in *Margins of Philosophy*. Tr. by Alan Bass.

notion of being presence, Derrida turns to Heidegger's metaphysical opening up of the differences between Being and beings. Drawing on "The Anaximander Fragment," where Heidegger discusses the ontological forgetting [or erasure] of the difference between Being and beings, and of that between presencing and the present, Derrida is able to point out that the ontological privilege of presence is made possible by the "erasure of the trace."

The notion of trace, as seen in biology, bio-psychology, genetics, cybernetics, points to the fact that the movement of *différance* is by no mean a mere "cultural" or "human" phenomenon.

[T]his trace is the opening of the first exteriority in general, the enigmatic relationship of *the living* to its other and of an inside to an outside: spacing.²⁹ [italics added]

[D]*ifférance* is the name we might give to the "active," *moving discord of different forces, and of differences of forces*, that Nietzsche sets up against the entire system of metaphysical grammar, wherever this system governs culture, philosophy, and science.³⁰ [italics added]

True, it is the movement that makes possible the opposition between "nature" and "culture." But, isn't this opposition too often reduced to "human" or "epistemolgical"

The University of Chicago Press. P. 21.

²⁹ Derrida, Jacques. 1974. *Of Grammatology*. Translated by Gayatre Chakravorty Spivak. The John Hopkins University Press. P. 70.

³⁰ Derrida, Jacques. 1982. "Différance" in *Margins of Philosophy*. Tr. by Alan Bass. The University of Chicago Press. P. 18.

since Derrida himself seems so obsessed with the game of “naming”?³¹ Indeed, the notion of writing [trace] as technology of [“artificial” or “natural”] evolution already pointed to a *trans-human* deconstruction of the opposition between “human” and “nonhuman”, just as it already pointed to a postcolonial deconstruction between the molar opposition between “western” and “nonwestern” through its *molecular cosmopolitanization* of heterogeneous cultural and linguistic elements.

In contemporary global society, the regime of technoscience often serves as a new conceptual center of cosmopolitanism, both political and cultural cosmopolitanism. It provides the promise of transversal communication between human and machine, as well as those between living and death, natural and artificial, subject and object, and etc., and at the same time, functions as a new institutional center of global political power that regulates the relation between western and non-western. On the one hand, the supposed “universal” and “transversal” character of technoscience is embraced everywhere as a *human* common wealth. On the other hand, it continues to be defined as *western*, and the essence of *western* civilization. The *becoming western* of the non-westerns (what we usually call “westernization”) remains the par excellence becoming in the era of technoscience, given the hierarchical order of global politics. As I point out in this study, during the early twentieth century when China first encountered the invincible power of “western” technology, the trajectory of the nationalist/pragmatic motif “Chinese learning as substance. Western learning as function” appeared to be a

³¹ For example, his assertion that *différance* is “a metaphysical name” because it is unnameable in a fundamental way, that *différance* is that which is unnameable but makes possible the game of “naming.” (Derrida, Jacques. 1982. P.26)

process in which the notion of substance *Ti* or Chinese spirit became an ever retreating horizon, and the *Ti/Yong* distinction itself was breaking down, and the strategy of universalizing the West came to the foreground. (Especially see the discussion in chapter 2) This trajectory continues. Nevertheless, the effort to resume a national/cultural center, as in the slogan “modernization with Chinese characteristics,” is indeed still an inherent part of this trajectory of westernization, which itself is a molecular transversal communication between two imagined homogeneous totalities called “Western culture” and “Chinese culture.” In the postcolonial situation, what we now call “Western Culture” is a *translational effect*, that is to say, it is a field that is constituted through the becoming western of non-western cultures through translational practices that negotiate the cultural and linguistic boundaries.

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