

---

# Reconciliation of Languages and Cosmopolitan Identities: Lin Yutang's Self-Translation

Hui Meng

## ABSTRACT

This article investigates Lin Yutang's (林語堂) bilingualism and cosmopolitanism under different circumstances to further the current discourse on dynamic language equivalences and culture-crossing. Different from previous critical works, this study covers Lin's major self-translated works from distinctive historical periods, *Zi jian Nanzi/Confucius Saw Nancy* (1928/1929), "A Hymn to Shanghai"/"Shanghai zhi ge" (1930/1933), and *Between Tears and Laughter/Ti xiao jie fei* (1943/1943), by examining the publishing environment into which these works entered, the historical contexts that drove him to self-translate, the various translation methods he adopted for specific situations, and the manifold changes he made with the shifts of skopos. The study brings to light a tendency of self-translators to revise their originals, which allows their works to benefit from the insights gained in self-translation, and contends that Lin's contribution to translation studies is much greater than is generally believed in academia.

**KEYWORDS** Lin Yutang, self-translation, cosmopolitan identities, skopos

---

*Ex-position*, Issue No. 47, June 2022 | National Taiwan University  
DOI: 10.6153/EXP.202206\_(47).0011

**Hui MENG**, Associate Professor, School of English for Specific Purposes, Beijing Foreign Studies University, China

*Ex-position*  
June  
2022

As the most influential transcultural writer of the twentieth century, Lin Yutang (1895–1976) has done more than any other person of his day to popularize and universalize Chinese philosophy and literature. Lin left a formidable legacy of bilingual writings through steadfast translation, self-translation, and literary creation in modern Chinese and Western intellectual history.<sup>1</sup> However, despite the historical influence of Lin’s literary and cultural practices and the sustained general interest in Lin’s writings across the Taiwan Strait and around the world, his cross-cultural works and, to be specific, his self-translated works, are very much understudied. Qian Suoqiao argues that a critical study on Lin would be rather difficult to undertake because a community of scholars from different cultural backgrounds willing to engage in cultural critique on Lin’s cross-cultural practices, his cosmopolitanism, and his reconciliation of languages has yet to emerge (Qian 2). This article aims to decipher how Lin’s poetic license and cosmopolitan identities allow him to accomplish cultural trans-coding and mediation, and how the shifts of skopos under different social and political frameworks drive him to consciously manipulate the original, adopt proper translation methods, and rearticulate meanings for new readerships.

### **Cosmopolitan Identities**

Uncommon among Chinese intellectuals of the early twentieth century, Lin shuttled easily between East and West. He was born into a small town in Fujian Province, which was historically connected to the West via immigration and commerce. In the nineteenth century, Protestant missionaries arrived by sea as Xiamen (Amoy), Fujian Province became a treaty port, making it the birthplace of Chinese Protestantism and a gateway to Western books and goods. Such ebullient cultural encounters put translation center stage, and the region, as a result, has seen quite a few prominent translators.<sup>2</sup> Lin’s father, a Presbyterian minister, gave Lin a forceful link to the West by sending him to missionary schools. The bicultural harmony Lin experienced in his youth gave way to confrontations, however, as he came to learn more about Chinese literature and culture. His was a cultural shock rarely experienced by most native Chinese intellectuals, as he confessed in his autobiography: “It was not only my studies, but the Christian background. . . . I knew all about the trumpets of Joshua which brought about the

---

<sup>1</sup> His works were also translated into many languages, including French, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, Norwegian, Finnish, Swedish, Hebrew, Arabic, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese.

<sup>2</sup> To name a few: Lin Shu (1852-1924), Yan Fu (1854-1921), Gu Hongming (1857-1928), Xu Dishan (1894-1941), and Bing Xin (1900-1999).

fall of Jericho, but I did not know how Meng Jiangnü's tears washed away a section of the Great Wall" (Lin, *Memoirs* 31).

As the first Chinese scholar to have obtained an overseas Ph.D. in linguistics, Lin became a professor at Peking National University (1923-1926) and the Dean of Women's Normal College (1926), where he met many writers and scholars with overseas educational backgrounds.<sup>3</sup> A regular contributor to *The China Critic* (published between 1928 and 1940, and in 1945), the first and only English-language weekly newspaper owned and edited by Chinese intellectuals in Republican China (1911-1949), where most of his speeches, essays, and humorous sketches appeared in a column titled "The Little Critic," Lin self-translated, footnoted, and published some of them in three literary fortnightly he founded between 1929 and 1935: *Analects* (*Lunyu*); *The Human World* (*Renshijian*); and *Cosmic Wind* (*Yuzhou feng*). Richard Jean So describes Lin's bilingual practice as "print ambitions" surpassing those of his peers who mostly wanted to shape the cultural discourse in China (134). Shuang Shen argues that Lin desired to cultivate a "cosmopolitan" Chinese reading public that was literate in English and attuned to the world beyond China; additionally, Lin hoped to prove to Anglophone readers that the Chinese were capable of modern thought (34-35). Lin's bilingual endeavor enabled him to become, in his words, a "world citizen."

In late 1929, the battle lines were beginning to be drawn in China between the Chinese league of leftist writers<sup>4</sup> led by Lu Xun and others like Lin Yutang. Japan's invasion in the 1930s prompted Chinese leftist writers to embrace an aggressive polemical style with an effort to "weaponize" literature for the purpose of national salvation. In contrast, Lin proposed "humor" and "self-expression" as key to his style. This alienated him from the dominant left-leaning writers, who criticized him as being too individualistic, an affront to literary activism. To leave the hostile literary arena, Lin accepted the invitation of Pearl Buck (1892-1973) and her husband Richard Walsh to move to the United States. Walsh, editor at John Day, was determined to make Lin a literary star, one the likes of which the American public had never seen before: a dashing, articulate, charismatic, and authentically Chinese author who could speak without political overtones.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> They include the leading figures in Modern Chinese Literature: Lu Xun (1881-1936), who had studied in Japan; and the renowned educator Hu Shih (1891-1962), a key contributor to Chinese liberalism and language reform educated at Columbia University.

<sup>4</sup> Political events of the mid-1920s, in which the Nationalists, communists, and warlord forces clashed frequently, initiated a shift to the left in Chinese letters, culminating in 1930 in the founding of the "League of Left-Wing Writers," whose members included many influential writers.

<sup>5</sup> Lin Yutang was not the first native Chinese intellectual who let his voice be heard in the West. At the turn

Walsh commissioned a primer on Chinese culture, which appeared as *My Country and My People* (1936), and later two novels, *Moment in Peking* (1937) and its sequel, *A Leaf in the Storm* (1941), all of which functioned within the literary mode of autoethnography and became instant bestsellers. By the year of Pearl Harbor, Lin had become a member of the New York intellectual scene, discussing the war against Japan on the radio, offering insight into American culture as a “foreigner” in various magazines, and appearing often on the society page of the *New York Times*. Lin became a sensation, the most famous Chinese person in America,<sup>6</sup> a cosmopolitan who had learned to reconcile cultural conflicts.

In China, Lin witnessed sweeping revolutions in China’s political system and cultural revolution that fundamentally changed the nation and its people; in the United States, where he lived from 1936 to 1966, he experienced the Sino-U.S. coalition during WWII and the contrastive Cold War era, and returned to Taiwan in his later years (1966-1976). The transnational experiences contributed to Lin’s formation of cosmopolitan identities, lending a special lens to the reconciliation of languages in his translation, especially self-translation.

## Self-Translation

Deeply rooted in linguistic and cultural traditions and realities, the practice of literary self-translation has become an increasingly common practice in our globalized world. Driven by different skopos, self-translators create a hybrid literature through migration of text, shift of identity, and transference of culture. Along with the discussion of the author’s self-translation strategies, this article aims to expound Lin’s<sup>7</sup> reconciliation of languages and identities and demonstrate how each of the self-translated texts selected for this study creates both “identities-in-translation” and “translated identities” (Rizzo 264).

In self-translation, there is a tendency to make drastic changes in the Target Text (TT). The motivation behind such changes is generally assumed to be the

---

of the twentieth century, there were only a few Chinese intellectuals who were able to translate the Chinese canon into foreign languages, such as Su Manshu (1894-1918), Chen Jitong (1851-1907) and Gu Hongming. Gu Hongming and Chen Jitong were the only two who produced works that influenced the West before the 1920s, with Gu being the more influential and widely read in Europe.

<sup>6</sup> Lin was awarded three honorary doctorates and celebrated as the great “son of the Orient” and “humane man of the world” who had become the universal if unofficial Chinese ambassador. For more details, see So 122-23; Sohigian 583.

<sup>7</sup> According to translation scholar Joseph S. M. Lau, prominent self-translators in China also include Eileen Chang, Yu Guangzhong, Wai-lim Yip, Wang Jingxian (Yang Mu), Zhang Cuowai, Lu Xun, Lao She, Bian Zhilin, Xiao Qian, Lin Taiyi, Bai Xianyong, and Nie Hualing, the majority of whom self-translated between Chinese and English, with the exception of Lu Xun, who self-translated between Chinese and Japanese.

poetic license of the self-translator. Being the original author of the Source Text (ST), the self-translator is seen as a “dictator” who practices the utmost freedom with his or her text (Al-Omar 211). Self-translation allows authors to take more liberties with the texts as compared with regular translators in that they have more complicated skopos to fulfill, such as identity shifts, expansion of literary fame, recovery of a lost audience, and battles against ideological restraints. Skopos theory, which states that translation is not simply an act of linguistic transference but rather an application of *purpose*, is especially useful in exploring the motivations behind the changes self-translators make in the TT, changes that go beyond poetic license, for which an equivalence-based paradigm alone is insufficient.

### Studies on Lin Yutang's Works

Critiques on Lin Yutang have largely focused on his life and English writings. So far, more than ten biographies of Lin have been published in Chinese,<sup>8</sup> the most popular of which was written by Lin's daughter, Lin Taiyi. Lin's own autobiography has gathered much critical attention, and Diran John Sohigian's *The Life and Times of Lin Yutang* (1991) has been much referenced. The scholarship upon Lin's works is diverse in subjects, themes, and historical periods: in a span of sixty years, Lin wrote forty books and hundreds of articles in both Chinese and English. Numerous articles, essays, and books in both Chinese and English have discussed Lin's life during different historical periods and his influence among various literary groups (May Fourth intellectuals, overseas students, the *Yusi* group, and Chinese Americans). Recent English scholarship on Lin has shifted from viewing Lin's works in China and in the U.S. as two distinct periods to a more holistic view of his entire opus. Six such works deserve our special attention.

Qian Suoqiao's edited volume, *The Cross-Cultural Legacy of Lin Yutang* (2015), is the first attempt at a comprehensive study of the cross-cultural legacy of Lin's literary practices in and across China and America. Qian's *Liberal Cosmopolitan* (2011), further, sets out to undo the stereotypes about Lin that variously dismissed him as a liberal of weak convictions or (during his years in North America) as a peddler of sanitized images of Chinese culture. Qian argues that Lin's approach to the problems of aesthetics offered a needed alternative to

<sup>8</sup> See, for instance, Lin Taiyi, *Lin Yutang zhuan* (*Biography of Lin Yutang*); Jianwei Shi, *Lin Yutang zai haiwai* (*The Overseas Life of Lin Yutang*); Yansheng Liu, *Lin Yutang pingzhuan* (*A Critical Biography of Lin Yutang*); and Jianwei Shi, *Lin Yutang zai Dalu* (*Lin Yutang in China*).

the agenda of an “elite intellectual class obsessed with ‘salvation of the nation’” (*Liberal Cosmopolitan* 159).

Richard Jean So’s *Transpacific Community* (2016) analyzes China-U.S. cultural encounters in the first half of the twentieth century, and for the Lin Yutang chapter, “Topographic Ethnic Modernism,” So reconnects Lin’s American and Chinese lives by reconstructing an aesthetic and political project started in the 1930s in China and fulfilled in the 1940s in America. So’s essay, “Collaboration and Translation” (2010), strategizes a new method for interpreting Asian American literature by looking into the interactions between editors and writers, as well as marketing strategies. It argues that the quandaries and challenges faced by Lin were not restricted to the late 1940s; they were instrumental in the emergence of novels such as *The Woman Warrior* by Maxine Hong Kingston in the 1970s and *Native Speaker* by Lee Chang-Rae in the late 1990s.

Tsu Jing’s *Sound and Script in Chinese Diaspora* (2010) devotes two chapters to Lin Yutang, respectively tracing the history of the invention of the Chinese typewriter and bracketing the ideological mystique of his bilingualism. Magdalena Filipczuk’s article, “Modelling ‘Self’ through Writing” (2021), reconstructs the philosophical practice of Lin, whose oeuvre has often been placed in the context of such contemporary masters as Gu Hongming, Hu Shih, Zhu Ziqing (1898-1948), Liang Shiqiu (1903-1987), and Feng Youlan (1895-1990), and argues that Lin constructs his “self” and shapes the model of philosophical life deeply rooted in the tradition of Chinese leisure culture.

While Lin’s works earned him worldwide acclaim, few studies consider the bilingual perspective and even fewer look at his self-translations. A handful of articles focus on one specific work of translation or self-translation. For example, Li Jing and Li Changbao’s “A Comparative Analysis” (2016) compares Lin’s self-translation of *Between Tears and Laughter* with that of Song Biyun from a gender translation perspective, and concludes that despite the shared androgynous identity and feminist aggressiveness, Lin’s self-translation appears to be more concise, unrestrained, as well as skopos-driven and emotionally-enhanced both in diction and layout of the text by being modified into a political propaganda set to awaken his innocent compatriots. So far, Li Ping’s *A Critical Study of Lin Yutang* (2012) is the only work that gives a comprehensive account of not only Lin’s theoretical views on translation but his translation criticisms and practices, and a small section of Chapter Five is devoted to his self-translation.

Different from previous critical works, this study covers major periods of Lin’s self-translation by examining the publishing environment into which his self-translated works entered, the historical contexts that drove him to

self-translate, the various translation methods he adopted for specific situations, and the manifold changes he made with the shifts of skopos. Of his self-translation opus, three are selected for this case study as they each represent a distinctive period of Lin's bilingual creation:

(1) *Zi jian Nanzi* (1928), the only play Lin ever published, which gained him initial fame. The subsequent English translation, *Confucius Saw Nancy* (1929), was done by Lin in response to the request of the Chinese students at Columbia University, who eventually performed it at the International House in December 1931. Lin saw this self-translation as a creative act for the transpacific theatre to secure the performability of the translated play (Long 216), which offered an opportunity for the American audience to catch a glimpse of Lin's interpretation of Confucius and the Chinese culture.

(2) Between July 3, 1930 and June 11, 1936, Lin wrote more than 150 short and pithy essays and self-translated nearly half of them. Of these bilingual essays, only four were published first in Chinese.<sup>9</sup> My article will analyze one representative pair (out of around sixty pairs): "A Hymn to Shanghai"/"Shanghai zhi ge." The English essay was first published in 1930 and republished in *The Atlantic Monthly* in January of 1936; it was self-translated by Lin in 1933, one year after Shanghai was attacked by Japan. The availability of multiple versions proves the importance of the article and reinforces Lin's criticism of the vulgarity of the colonized city and his concern with the fate of the city and its people. The study of this self-translation will further reveal the skopos and historical significance involved in the translation act.

(3) *Ti xiao jie fei* (1943), self-translated from *Between Tears and Laughter* (1943), a bestseller in the United States, became proof of Lin's patriotism during WWII. Lin translated the first eleven chapters, and Xu Chengbin<sup>10</sup> did the remaining thirteen. Carrying his self-translated books, Lin traveled to Chongqing, Guilin, and other cities to instill vigor and hopes in his compatriots and inspire determination to win the War of Resistance Against Japan. This self-translation act went beyond literary recreation, lending itself to political and patriotic purposes.

The following case studies investigate the ways in which Lin negotiates and reconciles two languages and two cultures so that the resulting bilingual products may reveal and capture his messages in the way he intends. I argue that Lin's bilingualism and his cosmopolitanism make this reconciliation possible. As he

<sup>9</sup> The newly published book *Selected Bilingual Essays of Lin Yutang* (2010) by Qian Suoqiao collected twenty-five pairs of them.

<sup>10</sup> Xu Chengbin (1920-1973), studied at St. John's University in 1936 and was awarded an M.A. from Oxford University. He was the third bishop of the Hong Kong Catholic diocese (1969-1973).

put it, he was “thinking with the brush in Chinese and the typewriter in English” (Lin, “80, Dies” 57).

### Case Study I: *Confucius Saw Nancy*

Ex-position  
June  
2022

*Confucius Saw Nancy* is based on a brief, enigmatic passage in the *Analects of Confucius* about the meeting that took place in 497 BC in the state of Wei: “Confucius saw Nanzi and Zilu was displeased, whereupon Confucius swore an oath, ‘If I have a dishonorable thought, may Heaven strike me!’” (*Analects* 6.28). Accused of licentious behavior ranging from lewdness to incest, Nanzi is a woman of notoriety in Chinese history. Confucius’s encounter with her poses a cluster of thorny questions for commentators throughout history (see, for instance, Goldin 27-28; Sohigian, *Confucius* 25). Against a one-sided censure of Nanzi, Lin’s play gives Nanzi a voice and retrieves Confucius’s humanity, which has been shrouded over time in saintliness (Sohigian, *Confucius* 28).

Provoked by the national debate over the play, Lin found an opportunity to introduce it to an American audience. In translating the historical play, Lin is faced with the challenge of translating a number of Culture-Specific Concepts (CSCs), a term defined by Peter Newmark as “concepts and institutions that are specific to the SL [Source Language] culture” (2). To decrypt CSCs, Newmark puts forward several important techniques: *naturalization*, *cultural equivalence*, *componential analysis*, *synonymy*, and *through-translation* (83-114). The translation methods are in line with the skopos rule, which allows the translator to choose information intentionally to achieve the goal of rendering and meeting the needs of the target language reader. In translating the title of the play, Lin employs the technique of naturalization:

子見南子

*Confucius Saw Nancy*

Lin adopts the natural pronunciation of “南子” in *pinyin*, *Nanzi*, and then adapts it to the SL morphology by changing it into Nancy. Lin also employs the technique of cultural equivalence:

時期：魯定公十四年（Emperor Lu Year 14）

Time: 497 BC

Ancient China used *Tiangan Dizhi* (Heavenly Stems and Earthly Branches) to



designate years and hours for formal documents or occasions. In this example, the regnal year of the emperor was mentioned to name a specific year, which was common practice in China's dynastic era. Instead of footnoting it, Lin converts "Emperor Lu Year 14" into "497 BC" for easy comprehension. Newmark points out that this kind of rendition does not often guarantee accuracy. As a case in point, Emperor Lu Year 14 corresponds more accurately to 496 BC in the Gregorian calendar.

Lin's adoption of sense-for-sense translation seems to have given him a free rein in translating CSCs. At times, he recasts a whole passage. At the beginning of the play, Lin rewrites the setting by expanding the concise description of eleven words into a full description with loaded details:

衛侯廷賓室，板凳數條，交椅數把。(268)

In the parlor of the King of Wei, richly but austere furnished with chairs and tea-tables placed against the walls on both sides of the room. Back of the sets of tables and chairs are latticed windows with curtains. In the middle of the wall is a door, with bead curtains. (1)

The Chinese sentence is composed of typical paratactic loose sentences without predicates. To achieve intratextual coherence, Lin breaks the sentence into several independent ones, adding subjects, linking verbs, and connective elements. Lin makes it a point to furnish his descriptions with more details so that his English-speaking audience would have a vivid picture of an Ancient Chinese court.

Lin does more than expansion; he adds interpretations and explanations:

You see jade has the five virtues of a gentleman. Its soft luster typifies Benevolence. Its clearness typifies Wisdom. Its hardness typifies Courage. Its cleanliness typifies Courtesy. And its unyielding nature typifies Righteousness. Because of these five virtues, jade is lovely. (22)

Lin adds a whole paragraph to interpret the culture of jade. He believes that jade culture is communicable and enchanting, which symbolizes beauty, nobility, and immortality and echoes the theme of the play—Confucius's lasting legacy.

Other than addition, omission is also employed to achieve his skopos of cultural mediation. For example:

這又何苦來？瀉冶則是個傻瓜，殺身之禍，處於自取，比干於紂，親則叔父，官則少帥，衷款之心，在於存宗廟而已，故以必死爭之，冀身

死之後，而紂悔悟，其本情至仁。陳靈公君臣宣淫，瀉冶位則下大夫，無骨肉之親，懷寵不去，以區區之一身，與拚老命，智者所弗為，其遭殺戮，豈非活該，結果死而無益。難道我也傻到像瀉冶嗎？(276)

Well, if I displease her, am I not free to quit any time? (18)

*Ex-position*  
June  
2022

Lin translates the paragraph into one short sentence, omitting many details, such as historical accounts of the danger of serving as an advisor to kings and queens. To keep a better flow to the play and conform to the rule of coherence, Lin does not translate them; instead, he renders the paragraph into a question that functions as a transition. Another example where Lin applies omission:

講仁義，修禮樂，祖述堯舜，憲章文武，以道治世。(273)

Great reputation and your beautiful moral and political theories. (11)

Lin omits the translation of “仁義” (humanity and righteousness), “禮樂” (rituals and music), and “堯舜” (two legendary Chinese emperors reigning around 2333-2184 BC); instead, he uses far more general terms such as “beautiful moral” and “political theories.” As a self-translator, Lin sometimes compromises rich cultural connotations in the original in compliance with the coherence rule to make the meanings more concise and communicable. Examples can also be found in the translation of idiomatic expressions:

子路：不是這樣說。子南夫人生性瀟灑，舉止言行與夫子所言周公之禮不合者很多，又嬌憨恃寵，喜怒無常。夫子與南子晤談，不諫，則無以正禮作樂，為萬民勸，諫而不聽，一旦話不投機，鬧得雙方下不了台，即不步比干、瀉冶之後塵，也只得悻悻然而去，終不能行以道治國而霸而王的志願。(276; emphasis added)

Tselu: [*unconvinced*] No, you don't understand me, I'm afraid. You know the queen is not just an ordinary female. She is highly **unconventional, pampered, capricious**, and very **liberal with her charms**. Now it will be the Master's duty to correct her **manners**, if he stays, but you must remember she is a queen, and a powerful queen at that. All I can see is that if the Master ever attempts to correct her manners, he will be courting the displeasure of a highly temperamental queen, that is all. (18; emphasis added)

This paragraph presents a special discourse genre, that is, four-letter-stock-phrase style prose in parallel structure with rhythmic arrangement. Since it finds no counterpart in English, Lin transforms it into normal English sentences. In this

short paragraph, there are nine four-letter stock phrases, most of which are translated into a single word or a short phrase: “生性瀟灑” is translated by Lin as “liberal with her charms”; “舉止言行” as “manners”; “周公之禮” (no sex before marriage, a quote from *Rites of Duke of Zhou* which appeared in the middle of the second century BC) as “conventional”; “嬌憨恃寵” as “pampered”; “喜怒無常” as “capricious.” The last four idiomatic expressions, “正禮作樂,” “諫而不聽,” “話不投機,” and “以道治國,” are not translated into English at all. Lin has to pay attention to the kind and degree of interpretative resemblance his English-speaking audience expects. That is to say, Lin must take the target audience’s cognitive environment into account and choose the most applicable approach to guide the audience in achieving optimal relevance in accordance with the skopos rule and coherence rule. In this sense, Lin is not taking any shortcut in distilling Chinese sayings into everyday English.

In the meantime, Lin also takes the fidelity rule into consideration and pays attention to the aesthetics of his translation, especially when he translates poems and couplets. For example:

蟋蟀在堂，  
歲聿其逝！  
今我不樂，  
日月其邁！ (290)  
The cricket is on the hearth,  
The year is drawing to a close;  
Why not make merry to-day  
Ere fleeting Time forward flows? (38)

Every Chinese character is monosyllabic and tonetic, which makes Chinese a rigorous and natural poetic language. Lexically, the monosyllable morpheme takes a leading position in Chinese word formation. Grammatically, the Chinese language centers on sentence order and function words, without morphological changes but with much flexibility in the construction of words and sentences. This feature provides vast room for men of letters to make their artistic creations. When the four tones were established in the Southern and Northern dynasties, writers began to consciously employ this cadence in their poetic experiments (Yan 864).

The above quote is a four-character regulated verse with four lines, with the first and the third (also the second and the fourth) lines constituting a couplet in which each line corresponds to the other in level or oblique tones. These designs

enable the poem to have a cadenced tone with a special musical charm, which gives rise to not only euphony but also a supremacy in emotional expressions. Though the rhyme and cadence are hard to maintain in the translation, the spirit of the poem is well preserved. Being rendered into modern English, the translation brings delight to the ears of modern-day readers.

Besides the techniques discussed above, Lin also pays attention to the feeling-tone of his translation. When Nanzi first meets Confucius, she expresses her admiration without any reservation:

南子：寡人君渴慕先生令名已久。以不獲一睹豐儀為張。今日叨蒙賜顧，寡小君心中欣喜不勝，只恨相見太晚，今奉白璧一雙，聊表企慕之忱。(278; emphasis added)

Nancia: Oh, I have heard so much about you, Confucius, and have long wished to have the pleasure of meeting you, Confucius. **Isn't it lucky for us and for our people that you have chosen to honor us with your visit?** May I present you with a pair of white jade, as a token of our high respect. (21; emphasis added)

Lin purposefully translates a statement into a question, “Isn't it lucky for us and for our people that you have chosen to honor us with your visit?”, to emphasize the gratitude and honor she feels to be graced with Confucius's visit. Lin's rendition does a good job transferring the feeling-tone of the original.

Any attempt to introduce a foreign literary work into the dominant culture has to make sure that the ST does not clash with the ideology of the target culture (Lefevere 87). To avoid supposedly inappropriate content, Lin employs the technique of undertone or in André Lefevere's term, “selective” faithfulness (92):

閨門之內，姑姊妹無別。(274)

There is certain **notoriety** connected with the court life of this country? (15; emphasis added)

In the original, notoriety is explicitly explained as an incest scandal, but in the translation, it is not specified. Lin applies self-censorship to his own text with a euphemistic undertone. Overtone is also used in the translation. For example, Lin translates two four-word set phrases 飲食男女 (wine, food, and sex) and 男女關係 (intimate relationship) (284) as “sex.” Openly discussing sex was taboo during the first half of the twentieth century in China. Lin turns what is

remotely hinted at in Chinese into an open discussion in English.

From the perspective of skopos, both in-text factors and extra-textual factors have exerted an influence on Lin's translation strategies. In order not to hinder the intratextual coherence of his translation, Lin mostly supplies basic cultural backgrounds via in-text explanations. Throughout the play, Lin employs only two endnotes to give credit to his quotations. It seems that Lin does not aim to produce a cultural export as he typically does for his novels or essays (Guan 220). Lin domesticates the text by crossing out inconsequent historical allusions, modernizing archaic expressions, and omitting cumbersome explanations or annotations. Lin's self-translation, a testimony to the adequacy of Skopos theory, enables his work to cross borders and reach the audience across the Pacific Ocean.

In the beginning of the 1930s, the image of China and the Chinese presented to the American public in the print media was largely a vestige of pre-Exclusion Era rhetoric that overwhelmingly depicted the Chinese in a less than positive light (Pattison 16). Despite that, other reports featured a new rhetoric that depicted the Chinese society in novel ways. The positive shift in the tone with which many of the articles pertaining to China were written is perhaps one of the first indications that the representation of China was undergoing a process of transformation (Pattison 29-30). Lin was undoubtedly one of the chief contributors to that positive change then, with the translation of the play as an early attempt at presenting China to the American audience. Lin was able to use one of the most circulated daily newspapers in the U.S. as a vehicle to counter pre-Exclusion Era conceptions of China more effectively, as is shown in his 1936 article, "A Chinese Gives Us Light on His Nation" (Pattison 37). Many of his articles and novels sought to demystify the Chinese culture. Lin's endeavor to mediate between the Chinese culture and the Western culture can be dated back to the early 1930s as well.

### **Self-Translation: Twin Bilingual Essays in the 1930s**

Having served simultaneously as a columnist for an English journal and a Chinese one based in Shanghai in the 1930s, Lin established himself as a leading essayist before he left Shanghai. Lin once claimed that "a writer is a man who reacts to his period with the whole force of his personality" (Lin, *Pleasures* 298):

My way of writing on current events was to say just enough to intimate my opinions and those of others so as to not just impress readers with hollow-

ness and Confucian bombast, but at the same time say something with concealed and implied meaning . . . when life is too miserable one cannot but be comical. . . . In all this glib flippancy and piquant loquacity there are both tears and smiles. (Lin, *Zizhuan* 24)

*Ex-position*  
June  
2022

In 1932, led by Lin Yutang, a group of Western-trained professionals and writers assumed an active leading role in introducing and promoting the Western concept of humor, which they believed that China had lacked, into Chinese literature and culture. Humor suddenly became the talk of the town and Lin became the “Master of Humor.” In most cases, the “humor” Lin employed in socio-political critique was in every sense “black humor.” Such “black humor” is well presented in an essay/poem, “A Hymn to Shanghai.” It was written as an essay but rendered as a poem in self-translation, as poetry seemed to be a safer means for social critique due to its abstractness, enigma, and metaphor.

### Case Study II: “A Hymn to Shanghai”

In the 1930s, Lin published a number of *xiaopinwen* (small prose pieces), which are defined by Lin himself as “short essays [that] should center around themselves and employ leisurely style . . . and in content cover everything from the big universe to tiny flies” (Benicka 230). Lin, among other men of letters of the first half of the twentieth century whom Edward Gunn labels as “economists of style” together with writers like Liang Shiqiu (1903-1987) and Yu Guangzhong (1928-2017) (Benicka 235). In the collection of his seminal bilingual works, Lin confronts the rapid cultural development of the era and the role that a Chinese intellectual must assume as he shares and translates his native country to the West. “A Hymn to Shanghai” embodies his sense of responsibility as he satirizes and critiques. Different from the translation of his play, this one was reversed, with the English coming out first and the Chinese translation later. Lin does more than translate; he rewrites and recreates, and the resulting translation is different not only in genre but also in tone from the original:

Shanghai is terrible in her strange mixture of eastern and western vulgarity, in her superficial refinements, in her naked and unmasked worship of Mammon, in her emptiness, commonness, and bad taste. She is terrible in her **denaturalized** women, **de-humanized** coolies, **devitalized** newspapers, **de-capitalized** banks, and **denationalized** creatures. She is terrible in her greatness as well as in her weakness, terrible in her monstrosities, perversities and inanities, terri-

ble in her joys and follies, and in her tears, bitterness and *degradation*. . . .  
(Qian, *Selected 1*; emphasis added)

In the English essay, Lin alludes to Shanghai's reality of colonialism (the state of deprivation) more directly by using a series of words with the prefixes *de-* (as is indicated in the text), but this introductory paragraph was deleted in his Chinese translation. Shanghai for Lin is an ambivalent trope symbolizing a cultural failure at the hands of colonialism. The English essay was written in 1930 when international settlement had been established for over sixty years and colonialism had existed for more than half a century in Shanghai. The Chinese essay was published in 1933, one year after Shanghai was attacked by Japan and would soon weather raids, invasions, and outright occupation by the Japanese till the mid-1940s. The changing political environment forced Lin to change his way of critique: a direct one was replaced by a concealed one disguised under a veil of humor. The following translation appears to be more faithful to the metaphor and sarcasm of the original:

Lin Yutang's  
Self-Translation

Thrice praise to the city renowned for her copper-odour and her fat, oily bankers, with green-tinted skins and sticky fingers;

To the city of hugging flesh and dancing flesh, of flat-chested ladies fed on jin-sen soup and doves'-nest congee, and still looking anemic and weary of life, in spite of their jin-sen soup and doves'-nest congee. (2)

我歌頌這著名銅臭的大城，歌頌你的銅臭，與你油臉大腹青筋黏指的商賈。

歌頌這摟的腰與舞的肉的大城，有吃人參湯與燕窩粥的小姐，雖然吃人參湯與燕窩粥，仍然面黃肌瘦，弱不禁風。(Qian, *Selected 4*)

Here the black humor is well preserved in the translation: *jin-sen* and doves'-nest (supposedly nutritional) are juxtaposed with weakness and emptiness.

Lin uses different stylistic devices to mimic the mixture of nationalities, cultures, and races in Shanghai. He inserts Chinese *pinyin* in the poem, such as *pien-pien* in "One thinketh of thy successful, *pien-pien*-bellied merchants, and forgeteth whether they are Italian, French, Russian, English or Chinese" (2), and *pien-pien* describes vividly the posture of a pot-bellied and pompous merchant. In translation, Lin deletes the line since the real interaction between foreigners and common Chinese people was rare, as most foreigners lived and worked only in an exclusive area or district. Besides semantic changes, Lin also makes syntactic changes as he satirizes different kinds of opportunists:

Ex-position  
June  
2022

One thinketh and wondereth of these things and faileth to comprehend their whence or their whither.

O thou city that surpasseth our understanding! ***How impressive are thy emptiness and thy commonness and thy bad taste!***

Thou city of ***retired brigands, officials and generals and cheats, infested with brigands, officials and generals and cheats who have not yet made their fortunes!***

O thou the safest place in China to live in, where even thy beggars are dishonest! (3; emphasis added)

我想到你的詩人、墨客、相士、舞女、戲子、蓬頭畫家、空頭作家、滑頭商人、尖頭捐客，

在夜闌人靜之時，我想到這種種的色相，而莫名其熙熙攘攘的所以；你這偉大玄妙的大城，東西濁流的匯總。你這中國最安全的樂土，連你的乞丐都不老實。

我歌頌你的浮華、愚陋、凡俗與平庸。(5; emphasis added)

The rhetorical device of repetition presented in the third sentence gives way to parallelism in translation, as a result of which the number of categories of those people (being satirized) in Shanghai almost doubled, thus tripling his sarcasm over those who, like parasites, thrive on the decadence of the city. Underneath the irony, however, there is also profound expectation and hope that Shanghai would be a great transmission belt of ideas. Thus, Lin calls for more doses of patriotism in the face of the impact of modernity and Western influences. As a liberal cosmopolitan, Lin is thinking a lot about the political situations and culture, clothing his opinions in his acerbic humor. Lin also employs the strategy of omission and chooses not to translate the following lines:

One thinketh of thy masseuses, naked dancer, *Carlo Garcias*, and thy Foo-chow Road sing-song houses. . . . (2; emphasis added)

Here the use of expressions such as “thinketh” is intended to mock the language of the cleric and missionary as they tended to speak in this antiquated manner. Also, “Carlos Garcias,” a Mexican who made a fortune shipping tequila from Mexico to Shanghai and into Prohibition-era California, running dog races, boxing matches, and nightclubs, was then quite a presence in the murky underworld of Old Shanghai, though he was less known to the Chinese people. The deletion is necessary in that the sarcasm Lin makes through this iconic figure would not work for its lack of resonance with most of the Chinese readers.



Sarcasm aside, Lin does not despise the city. On the contrary, Lin's patriotism seems to be no weaker than the leftist writers. Also, Lin would have taken the Japanese attack very personally as the building where he worked for the *Little Critic* took a direct hit from the Japanese shell in 1932 and burned to the ground, taking with it its entire library of half a million books, which included irreplaceable classic texts in their early editions.<sup>11</sup> A prominent purpose of Lin's self-translation could be for Shanghai to emerge from the crisis better, newer, and stronger. His patriotism was especially clear when he published outside of China. For example, in his earlier essay, "Captive Peiping Holds the Soul," published in *The New York Times* in 1923, Lin writes, "Peiping is one of the jewel cities of the world. Except Paris and (by hearsay) Vienna, there is no city in the world that is quite so nearly ideal, with regard to nature, culture, charm and mode of living as Peiping" (Lin, *Captive* 110). With regard to Western imperialism, however, Lin strikes hard. For example, when Lin indicts American extraterritoriality in China, his nine-page essay titled "An Open Letter to an American Friend" is unsparing. He sardonically questions why the Americans were so intent on maintaining extraterritoriality in China when they had no such practices with Poland, Romania, or Russia (Lin, *Little* 124-32).

Lin's "A Hymn to Shanghai" reflects the mission of the journal that he published in, as the editors declared "international understanding" to be the lofty objective of the magazine and claimed that the "twain of the East and the West" could be brought together only through "mutual understanding" (Lin, *Editorial*). In the same article, the editors commented on the language of the magazine, English, emphasizing that English was a means to address not only foreigners but also the generation of Chinese intellectuals who were sophisticated cosmopolitans well versed in English.

Lin's bilingual essays suggest a kind of "bi-identical" relationship: they are certainly two separate texts, but also identical in theme and content. In producing these bilingual texts, Lin adopts a reader-oriented approach, manipulating not only the content but also the structure. One frequent practice of textual manipulation lies in the very opening paragraph, as the author tries to re-situate his readership. Nevertheless, whatever differences there may exist between the original and the translation, it is still undeniable that these pairs of essays have demonstrated a bilingual identity that binds the two texts into one.

---

<sup>11</sup> Refer to the interview of "Lin Yutang and Hymn to Shanghai with Paul French," accessed on 21 Feb. 2022. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Lq1mg2WzVE>>.

Ex-position  
June  
2022

### Case Study III: *Between Tears and Laughter*

Lin's translation and self-translation can be categorized into two distinct periods: his Shanghai era in the 1930s and the three decades after he emigrated to the United States in 1936. Lin's two-way translation/writing gradually gave way to one-way translation from Chinese to English. In representing China sympathetically, he sought to break down ingrained stereotypes and promote cross-cultural understanding. He wrote from the perspective of a cultural outsider, attempting to make his largely undervalued cultural background accessible to Americans, an undertaking full of opportunities and challenges. In an essay titled "About the Writing of *My Country and My People* and *The Importance of Living*," Lin recorded that, having composed over two hundred pages, he consigned the entire manuscript to flames because "the whole framework was based on an overall criticism of modern Western materialist culture, and the criticism became deeper . . . and the style became more . . . argumentative."<sup>12</sup> The final product presents itself less as a critique of Western culture, but more as a welcoming of the Western audience to the Chinese culture and world. Since then, Lin appeared to be apolitical in his emphasis on humor, self-expression and leisure. He wrote:

I am glad. . . . I wrote on the Tooth-Brush. For a tooth-brush is a tooth-brush in 1935 as in 1930, whereas my readers themselves will have forgotten what the Fourth Plenary Session was all about. . . . I have the audacity to hope, however, that my readers will still be interested in my tooth-brush. (Lin, *Little v-vi*)

After Japan invaded China in 1937, Lin wrote about more than his "toothbrush." A lot of his essays were aimed at supporting China and calling for international aid. He began to question the sincerity of the help the U.S. gave to China. His novel *Moment in Peking* (1939) gives a searing portrait of the Japanese invaders. He became deeply concerned with world politics and dedicated himself to expanding and rewriting the manuscript of *O This Age, This Moment!* with the hope of winning more sympathy for his beloved motherland and changing the way China was perceived by the West. This work, renamed *Between Tears and Laughter* (abbreviated as *BTL* in the following analysis), was finally published by the John Day Company in July 1943 in the form of an essay collection, and it

---

<sup>12</sup> The Chinese text may be found in Lin Yutang, "About the Writing" 876. The English translation is quoted from Qian, *Liberal Cosmopolitan* 178.

instantly became one of the top ten bestsellers of the year (Qian, *Lin Yutang* 123). However, soon after its publication, *BTL* was bashed by critics for its ironic tone and harsh sarcasm toward the Western powers.

Lin's critique of imperialism put his cosmopolitan appeal in America to the test. Up till this work, most of Lin's books published in the United States had been bestsellers with almost unanimous rave reviews. The reception of *BTL*, however, was quite mixed—or, to be exact, unfavorable. For example, Krishnalal Shridharani commented, "He pulls no punches and his humor has become barbed . . . to prick our own tribe, Well, how inconsiderate" (342). Qian Suoqiao explains that the American intellectual establishment at that time was not quite ready for a critical cosmopolitan from China. Lin's acceptance into the New York intellectual circles was based on his "good-will" cultural ambassadorship introducing the Chinese cultural wisdom to the American public. But if that "good-will" entailed a critique of British and American imperialism and of Western modernity utilizing "Chinese cultural wisdom," then he simply became a Chinese patriot who had lost his temper and his sense of humor (Qian, *Liberal* 208).

This book even led to a break with his longstanding friend, Pearl Buck, which in turn resulted in Lin's departure from his longtime publisher John Day. It was under such trying circumstances that, in the following year, Lin decided to translate the first eleven chapters of *BTL* into Chinese and renamed it *Ti xiao jie fei*,<sup>13</sup> which literally means "Neither Tears nor Laughter." The phrase is used as a symbol of intellectuals' anguished frustration. Through self-translation, Lin was able to let his voice heard in his motherland.

Contrary to his expectation, however, the book was met with a series of attacks from the leftists led by Guo Moruo (1892-1978), who ridiculed Lin's critique of Western materialism as completely out of touch with the Chinese situation and questioned Lin's motive by arguing that "when China was poverty-stricken at wartime, Lin had the privilege of flying back and forth from New York to Chongqing. If scientific materialism should be condemned, why could not Lin leave New York and come back to stay in China?" (qtd. in Qian, *Lin Yutang* 126-27). Guo Moruo named Lin Yutang the "modern Gu Hongming, wearing a Western suit, eating fancy dishes and lecturing in English in China" (qtd. in Chen 38).

Such attacks from both sides were unexpected. Wartime politics seemed to have left Lin limited space to mediate between two cultures and two worlds.

---

<sup>13</sup> Lin Yutang translated Chapters 1-11 and Xu Chengbing translated Chapters 12-23.

Though the book and its translation were unfavorably received, it did not affect their historical significance and the impact they had upon Western and Eastern intellectual worlds. Situated in a different historical era, this self-translation distinguishes itself from the previous self-translations. Lin employs some translation strategies he seldom used before, like the use of double prefaces. In the original, Lin writes a short “Preface to Myself”:

The purpose of this book is to say something that must be said and say it with simplicity. . . . Our problem is the problem of moral decay and regeneration. From a handful of dust faith must come. There is more hope in a heather rose than in all the tons of Teutonic philosophy. I do not know how to say these things, but God give me strength to say them. (vii)

此書之作，因有些不得不說的話，待要明白曉暢把它說出…一把沙塵，可起信念。讀了萬卷條頓哲學，不如聽一朵野玫瑰的說法…這些話不知從何說起。皇天默祐，賜我勇氣把它說到底。(原序 1)

In this one-paragraph preface, Lin states briefly the *skopos* of the book and emphasizes that this is a “preface to myself,” a self-assurance, a mission statement.

On top of the original preface, Lin writes a new four-and-a-half-page preface stating in much depth the circumstances under which the book was translated and the reason why he decided to do so. For translators, prefaces have often been used as a vehicle of ideological inculcation by which a translator is allowed to instill his/her own values and assert a clear-cut position for the text. Lin makes his translation a politically-oriented propaganda to “speak out the unspeakable words” and ensure that the revelation of capitalism, materialism, and Western politics be transmitted to his fellow countrymen word by word (Lin, Preface 2).

Due to his innate dual identity, Lin is rightfully endowed with the power to manipulate the content and the structure of the text. In the beginning, Lin restates the purpose of his writing. He translates one long sentence into twelve short statements in which there are eight fixed expressions:

For every good book is worth the reader’s while when there is a real communion of the spirit and this is possible only when he feels he is being taken into the author’s confidence and the author is willing to reveal to him the innermost searchings of his heart and talk, as it were, in an unbuttoned mood, collar and tie loose, as by a friend’s fireside. (1)

蓋凡著書行世，比使作者讀者之間，真能開城相與，暢所欲言，始能開卷有益。而欲如此，必使讀者相信，可以聽到作者肺腑之言，宛如

良友夜談解衣磅礴一種境地。良友爐邊夜談，決不至意不得宣，最多意見不同而已。(1; emphasis added)

Lin paraphrases the English text in fixed Chinese expressions, and, as a result, his translations are inevitably tinged with strong Chinese characteristics. Lin considers paraphrase to be “the best and most satisfying method” of translation (Lin, *Wisdom* 49). The translation uses words that are found mainly in serious Chinese literature written in a grand and elevated style. As a self-translator with simultaneous cultural cognition, Lin is capable of decoding the implications of given words and reproducing the context of the original. Lin’s translation further enriches the original, especially when he translates words with rich cultural connotations, like the translation of “Karma”:

Lin Yutang's  
Self-Translation

So I must speak of “Karma.” The Hindus have evolved a perfect theory of the law of moral action, and you can understand this law of moral action only when you take the historical perspective. (11)

所以我們只好談起佛法說業。[按梵語 karma“羯磨”指身心言行必有苦樂之果，名為業因，通常所謂“宿業”“現業”之業也。] 印度人早已發明道德行為善惡果報的因緣。(12; emphasis added)

Lin not only phonetically transliterates karma as *jiemo* (羯磨), but also figuratively translates it as *yeyin* (業因, literally denoting “cause and effect”), and even further interprets it as *suye* (宿業, “historical cause and effect”) and *xianye* (現業, “current cause and effect”). Lin cites not only the teachings of the Buddha, but also the texts of Confucius, Lao-tzu, and Thucydides throughout his book, making *BTL* read like a warning sermon or, in Lin’s own words, “preaching” (128).

In order to compensate for the losses incurred in the process of their “aggression,” translators would add supplementary information to recreate the equivalent effect or further strengthen the artistic appeal in the given context through semantic shifts. For example:

But if we take the historical perspective and view the development of human events, we are struck by a paradox which the science of human history so far has not been able to solve and the economic school of historians tend to ignore because they cannot make *head or tail* of it. (10; emphasis added)

但是如果我們用歷史的眼光來觀察現世，我們便遇到一種難題，這是歷史科學所無法解決而歷史經濟觀一派所常欲避免的，因為這一

Ex-position  
June  
2022

派辨不出他是牛是馬。(9; emphasis added)

Lin translates “cannot make head or tail of it” as “辨不出他是牛是馬” (cannot tell bull or horse of it). The semantic shift adds local flavor to the translation. Lin makes semantic changes not just to idiomatic expressions, but to literary quotes from well-known authors. He borrows from Robert Browning’s *Pippa Passes* the phrase, “the snails will be on the thorn,” to picture the peaceful future:

When the war is over, *the snails will be on the thorn*, and the world will wag on, very much alive, as it always does, **between tears and laughter**. (9; emphasis added)

大戰完了，花香鳥啼，世界還是世界，在啼笑悲喜之間流動下去。  
(10; emphasis added)

A verse drama published as the first volume of Browning’s *Bells and Pomegranates* series in 1841, *Pippa Passes* concerns the phenomenon of a sudden recovery of moral awareness and free will, which is exactly what Lin is advocating. In the translation, Lin contextualizes the phrase, “the snails will be on the thorn” and translates it, by way of a metaphoric supplementing, as “花香鳥啼” (an idyllic scene with singing birds and fragrant flowers). He recreates a harmonious vision of nature that symbolizes peacefulness for the Chinese readers, and in the sentence, the title of the book is also well contextualized and its significance nicely revealed.

Lin also employs the technique of deletion. To mock the hidden motives of the world superpower, Lin writes a poem:

And so like Alice in Wonderland,  
The fears grow bigger and  
Bigger even as the tones  
Fall lower and lower  
Until the fears  
Themselves take  
On the shape of  
A mouse’s tail—  
The ugly, filthy  
Thing. Anyway  
Look, Russia  
is such

a big  
 power  
 China  
 Also  
 is go-  
 ing  
 to be  
 a big  
 pow-  
 er  
 you  
 can-  
 not  
 af-  
 ford  
 to  
 let  
 Ind-  
 ia  
 go  
 .  
 .  
 .  
 . (118)

Lin Yutang's  
 Self-Translation

He creates the image of the long tail of a mouse by dividing the sentences into parts according to syllables to mock in form the viciousness of superpowers. To maintain the same effect in his translation is an impossible task in that Chinese characters are not breakable. Lin has no choice but to leave it out in his translation.

To make translation more reader-friendly, Lin is inclined to translate words of strong connotations into customized Chinese terms so as to serve his intention of political moralization. He translates “the China war” as “中日戰爭” (China-Japan War). Supplementing of this kind is also employed in the translation of chapter titles. He is eager to publicize his political viewpoints in the Chinese context and transforms the title of each chapter into a composite structure which consists of two separate parts: a Sinicized main heading and an explanatory subheading. In his subheadings, Lin not only clarifies the main points of

every chapter but also associates the contents with international realities of his time.

Lin, as a self-translator, seems to be “traditionally” unfaithful to the ST and eager to modify, manipulate and rewrite it at different levels. Besides, Lin attempts to transform the ST into a Sinicized one by employing classical vernacular Chinese, adopting fixed Chinese expressions, imitating the common style of ancient classics, and supplying explanatory semantic rendering, so as to make his translations better received among contemporary Chinese readers. In a word, it is the specific historical and political background that has influenced Lin’s translation in various aspects regarding the interpretation of the ST, the layout of the book, the titles and subtitles of chapters, the selection of translation strategies, the deletion of paragraphs, the paraphrasing of the context, and the annotations of culture-loaded words.

## **Conclusion**

Exceeding the linguistic level, Lin’s self-translation tackles history, society, culture, and ideology. Lin’s ability to attract and sustain the fascination of American and Chinese readers, while not putting them off by the very foreignness of what they encounter in his text, rests in large part on his adoption of a balanced rhetoric, the right balance between foreignness and accessibility. He oscillates between Western and Chinese perspectives to charm rather than shock the reader. His ever-shifting vantage point surprises and delights readers, providing his texts with novelty. One strategy for establishing a bond between himself and his readers (on both the American and Chinese sides) is to imitate a Western perspective and pretend to view China as an alien culture and vice versa (Rivi 153-54). Lin’s bilingual practice bears testimony to the “historical taintedness” of cultural translation and the translator in disparate cultural and political contexts. This kind of translational politics is not necessarily reproducible in times and places beyond that particular moment; therefore, even though Lin engaged in back-and-forth translation between the two languages consistently throughout his life, the meaning of this translation changed as he moved from one context to another.

From the perspective of the authors of the ST, Lin makes comparatively more adjustments in self-translation than in his translation of other authors’ works, such as Bernard Shaw’s *Pygmalion* and Dora Russell’s *Hypatia*. Lin is particularly flexible in making various degrees of adjustment, and in general his translations published in America usually contained more adjustments than



those published in China. To Western readers who lack the literary and cultural knowledge of the SL, translations with too many Chinese words and phrases might distract and befuddle them and thus adjustments happen more often. In relation to publishers, Lin has more authority and power in China than in America, so he has greater freedom in writing and translating for Chinese publishers than for American publishers (Shih 401). Thus, he gets more freedom in deciding what to translate and how to go about the translation in English-Chinese translation than in Chinese-English translation. Lin, as a self-translator, crossed the two worlds that constituted his cultural existence. Despite the “deep-seated” differences, Lin found reconciliation between these two worlds and his two selves. Reading Lin often means crossing linguistic boundaries in one and the same text and being exposed to translingual modes of representation.

## WORKS CITED

- Al-Omar, Nibras A. M. “The Self-Translator as Cultural Mediator: In Memory of Jabra Ibrahim Jabra.” *Asian Social Science* 8.13 (2012): 211-19.
- Benicka, Jana. “Lin Yutang as an Advocate of the ‘Discursive Classical Chinese’ (Yuluti) Language Register.” *Studia Orientalia Slovaca* 11.2 (2012): 225-38.
- Chen, Dang. *Ping Lin Yutang (Critical Essays on Lin Yutang)*. Guilin: Huaguang Bookstore, 1944.
- Felipczuk, Magdalena. “Modelling ‘Self’ through Writing: Lin Yutang as a Philosopher of the Art of Life.” *Synthesis Philosophica* 71.1 (2021): 23-38.
- Goldin, Paul Rakita. *The Culture of Sex in Ancient China*. Honolulu: U of Hawaii P, 2002.
- Guan, Xiangzhong. “An Alternative Explanation for Translation Variations in *Six Chapters of a Floating Life* by Lin Yutang.” *Perspectives: Studies in Translatology* 22.2 (2014): 198-221.
- Lefevere, André. *Translating Literature: Practice and Theory in a Comparative Literature Context*. 1992. Beijing: Foreign Languages Teaching and Research P, 2006.
- Li, Jing, and Changbao Li. “A Comparative Analysis Between Self-Translation and Conventional Translation of *Between Tears and Laughter* from Gender Translation Perspective.” *Studies in Literature and Language* 12.6 (2016): 24-37.
- Li, Ping. *A Critical Study of Lin Yutang as a Translation Theorist, Translation Critic and Translator*. Diss. City U of Hong Kong, 2012.
- Lin, Taiyi. *Lin Yutang zhuan (Biography of Lin Yutang)*. Changchun: Northeastern Normal UP, 1994. Lin Yutang Ser.: Lin Yutang 1895-1976. 29.
- Lin, Yutang. *Between Tears and Laughter*. New York: John Day, 1943.
- . “Captive Peiping Holds the Soul.” *New York Times* 15 Aug. 1937: 110.

- . *Confucius Saw Nancy*. *P'unliu Monthly* 6.1 (1928).
- . *Confucius Saw Nancy and Essays About Nothing*. Shanghai: Commercial P Limited, 1936.
- . "80, Dies; Scholar, Philosopher." *New York Times* 27 Mar. 1976: 57.
- . "Guanyu wuguo yu wumin ji shenghuo de yishu zhi xiezuo" ("About the Writing of My Country and My People and The Importance of Living"). *Yutang wenji (Collected Works of Lin Yutang)*. Vol. 2. Taipei: Kaiming, 1978. 876.
- . *Lin Yutang mingzhu quanji (A Collection of Lin Yutang's Works)*. Vol. 13. Shenyang: Northeastern Normal UP, 1994.
- . *Lin Yutang zizhuan (Lin Yutang's Autobiography)*. Nanjing: Jiangsu wenyi chubanshe, 1995.
- . *The Little Critic: Essays, Satire and Sketches on China*. Shanghai: Commercial P Limited, 1935. First Ser.: 1930-1932.
- . *The Pleasures of a Non-Conformist*. Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1962.
- . Preface. *Between Tears and Laughter*. Chongqing: Commercial P Limited, 1945.
- . *Ti xiao jie fei (Between Tears and Laughter)*. Trans. Lin Yutang and Xu Chengbing. Chongqing: Commercial P Limited, 1945.
- . "What We Believe." Editorial. *The China Critic* 1 Jan. 1931: 3-4.
- . *The Wisdom of Confucius*. New York: Random House, 1938.
- . *Zi jian Nanzi (Confucius Saw Nanzi)*. *Dahuang Ji (The Lone Wayfarer)*. Shanghai: Life Bookstore, 1934.
- Liu, Yansheng. *Lin Yutang pingzhuan (Critical Biography of Lin Yutang)*. Nanchang: Baihuazhou wenyi chubanshe, 1994.
- Long, Yangyang. "Transpacific Theatre: Lin Yutang's Self-Translation as a Creative Act." *Asia Pacific Translation and Intercultural Studies* 6.3 (2019): 216-33.
- Newmark, Peter. *Approaches to Translation*. Hertfordshire: Prentice Hall, 1988.
- Pattison, Erin. *Changing Perceptions of China in 1930s America*. Diss. Washington U in St. Louis, 2012.
- Qian, Suoqiao, ed. *The Cross-Cultural Legacy of Lin Yutang: Critical Perspectives*. Berkeley: U of California P, 2015.
- . Introduction. Qian, *The Cross-Cultural Legacy* 1-16.
- . *Liberal Cosmopolitan: Lin Yutang and Middling Chinese Modernity*. Leiden: Brill, 2011.
- . *Selected Bilingual Essays of Lin Yutang*. Hong Kong: Chinese U of Hong Kong P, 2010.
- Qian, Jun. *Lin Yutang: Negotiating Modernity Between East and West*. Diss. U of California, Berkeley, 1996.
- Rivi, Handler-Spitz. "Montaigne's Role in Lin Yutang's *Importance of Living*." Qian, *The Cross-Cultural Legacy* 143-61.

- Rizzo, Alessandra. "Translation and Bilingualism in Monica Ali's and Jhumpa Lahiri's Marginalized Identities." *Text Matters* 2.2 (2012): 264-75.
- Shen, Shuang. *Cosmopolitan Publics: Anglophone Print Culture in Semi-Colonial Shanghai*. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 2009.
- Shi, Jianwei. *Lin Yutang zai Dalu (Lin Yutang in China)*. Beijing: Beijing shiyue wenyi chubanshe, 1991.
- . *Lin Yutang zai Haiwai (The Overseas Life of Lin Yutang)*. Tianjin: Baihua wenyi chubanshe, 1992.
- Shih, Shu-mei. *Sinophone Studies: A Critical Reader*. New York: Columbia UP, 2013.
- Shridharani, Krishnalal. "Churchill and Pericles." *Common Sense* (1943): 342.
- So, Richard Jean. *Transpacific Community: America, China, and the Rise and Fall of a Cultural Network*. New York: Columbia UP, 2016.
- Sohigian, Diran John. "Confucius and the Lady in Question: Power Politics, Cultural Production and the Performance of *Confucius Saw Nanzi* in China in 1929." *Twentieth-Century China* 36.1 (2011): 23-43.
- . *The Life and Times of Lin Yutang*. Diss. Columbia U, 1991.
- Tsu, Jing. *Sound and Script in Chinese Diaspora*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2010.
- Yan, Zhaohui. "The Creative Reproduction of Chinese Ancient Poetry's Phonological Beauty in English Translation." *Theory and Practice in Language Studies* 3.5 (2013): 846-51.

**Lin Yutang's  
Self-Translation**

\*\*Manuscript received 26 Aug. 2021,  
accepted for publication 15 Mar. 2022

