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Authorial Self-Fashioning In A Global Era: Authorial Prefaces To Translated Editions Of Twentieth Century Chinese Fiction

Recent debates on world literature have shifted from discussions of text selection and canon-formation, to issues of reception and circulation. Damrosch's question of "What is World Literature?" is now regularly framed in terms of the reader and the reading context, but less attention has so far been paid to the constructed figure of the *author* of the works in question, and the process by which she or he constructs their image as a *producer* of such globally significant writing.

As I have argued elsewhere, the authorial preface provides a unique forum for the exploration of the dynamic relationship triangle between the constructed author, the imagined reader, and the fictional work.[1] When considering prefaces written specifically for translated texts, which travel across national borders, a new dimension is added – that of the translated work and its new imagined readership. The authorial preface, long privileged in Chinese literary tradition, allows the author to discuss motivations for writing, to construct something of a self-image, and to choose whether or not to address, or even acknowledge, the presumed reader.

In formulating statements about why they write, the majority of Chinese authors have traditionally subscribed to a reader-centred didactic approach, taking on the burden of conveying morality (*wen yi zai dao* 文以載道), where writing has the explicit purpose of influencing the reader. Alongside this claimed motivation was an alternative option for a more author-centred expressive function of 'venting emotion' (*xie fen* 洩憤) originating with Qu Yuan 屈 原 (c.340-

[1] See Weightman, "Wuxin chaliu," and "Authoring the Strange".

278 BC),[2] but subscribed to by numerous authors outside of the mainstream ever since.[3] In the twentieth century, as many Chinese authors sought to engage with, or at least to be seen as engaging with, a global readership, the long-held view of literature contributing to the national good allowed the formulation of new declarations of motivation within the didactic tradition, of contributing to global revolution, enhancing cross-cultural understanding and so on. From its earliest incarnation, according to Lydia Liu, even the Chinese term *shijie wenxue* 世界文學 (world literature), "assumed the enormous burden of explaining and justifying China's membership in the modern international community."[4]

In 1990, Stephen Owen famously noted what for him was the negative effect of globalisation on contemporary Chinese poetry, where the translatability of language became a goal. In Owen's words, the writers "must write envisaging audiences who will read their work in translation."[5] The notion that authors must be "envisaging audiences" when they write may of course be contested by writers who often claim not, at least intentionally, to be writing for anyone but

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[2] Qu Yuan had claimed this method of release as his reason for writing when he wrote of being able to "vent his indignation by expressing his feelings (*fa fen yi shuqing* 發憤以抒情)." This line appears in the first poem of the 4th *juan*, "The nine declarations" of Qu Yuan's *Lyrics of Chu*. See Wang Yunwu (ed.), *Guoxue jiben zongshu*, 217:54.

[3] A third justification of 'speaking out because of injustice (*bu ping ze ming* 不平則鳴)' is sometimes subsumed within the *xie fen* tradition. For more on these formulations within prefaces to traditional *zhiguai* tales see Weightman, "Authoring the Strange", 2018.

[4] Liu, *Translingual Practice*, 188.

[5] Stephen Owen, "The anxiety of global influence". The debate that ensued is cited in Damrosch, *What is World Literature*, 20, and discussed in more detail by various scholars, notably Andrew Jones, "Chinese Literature in the "World" Literary Economy", 171-190.

themselves.[6] If we can assume, though, that all authors, however subconsciously, do write to be read, then it is illuminating to see how these readers may be addressed, referred to, alluded to, or otherwise 'envisaged' in those occasions when an author produces a specific preface for a new translated version.

The three authors I have chosen as case studies are representative of three different eras of the twentieth century.[7] They are all prolific preface-writers. In each case their biographical details demonstrate a conscious and pro-active engagement with the world outside of China. They are all acknowledged in terms of literary merit both domestically and abroad. It is probably no coincidence that they are also all male. The first two, in common with most of the major twentieth century authors, were prolific translators of foreign literature into Chinese. The third is not.

Lu Xun 鲁迅 (1881--1936) -- Author as Global Authority

When one thinks of (or indeed Googles) Lu Xun and "preface", inevitably the first thing that comes to mind is his well-known 1922 authorial preface to *A Call to Arms*, which narrates his

[6] This notion has recently been applied systematically in Rebecca Walkowitz's exploration and analysis of a range of novels from many different literatures which, in her words, are "born translated". Unfortunately Walkowitz's important volume does not include analysis of Chinese works. *Born Translated*, 2015.

[7] 'Representative' is overused in Chinese literary studies, perhaps even more so than in western academic circles, though it often has different implications. Here I am simply using it to justify a choice of three highly influential writers, who, due to their status at the time, their recognition both by academic infrastructures and by general readers, can tell us something about the broader literary context of their respective times, albeit a male-dominated one.

reasons for giving up his medical studies and deciding to write literature.[8] Surely the most famous authorial preface in modern Chinese literature, the style is personal, mixing autobiographical, externally verifiable facts with insights into his own motivations and emotions. The self-depiction of Lu Xun the writer is a conscious one, with no obvious attempt to construct a fictional persona. There is a clear assumption throughout on behalf of the author that the reader is aware of the creator of the story, that he/she is interested in his professional life and his reasons for writing fiction. There is also a strong sense that the preface is an important medium for communication.

As further evidence of this privileging of the genre, a two-volume collection of his prefaces and postfaces from 1936 was published by Shandong Pictorial Publishing House in 2004.

The 2004 collection begins by reprinting some correspondence between Lu Xun and his editor, during the last 4 months of Lu Xun's life, in response to the editor's suggestion to publish such an anthology. While Lu Xun is quite ill by this time, he is evidently still taking an active part in the publication process. In a letter of 5 April 1936[9] he comments on the feasibility of publication (*wo kan shi you difang chubande* 我看是有地方出版的), notes possible problems in compiling a comprehensive anthology, mentioning that some may have been lost, refers to an issue of copyright with one preface, and considers whether or not readers would understand what he had to say. His overview of the whole process, from creation to book, is clear, and he demonstrates a clear expectation that he would and should be personally involved in each stage. In a further letter a month later,[10] he advises including a few previously unpublished prefaces, and deleting some others. He discusses how some of his work was censored, because the

[8] "Nahan zixu 吶喊自序," Lu Xun, *Xuba ji*, 1:3.

[9] Lu Xun, *Xuba ji*, iii-iv.

[10] Letter dated May 4 1936, Lu Xun, *Xuba ji*, vii.

publishers weren't brave enough. The tone of this correspondence between an author and editor is revealing and clearly demonstrates Lu Xun's authority, in the broadest sense of the word – he understands the market, the legal issues about rights, and the practical logistics of editorial work.

In a similar way, in his prefaces Lu Xun clearly situates himself as being completely in control of his own constructed authorial persona and didactic mission, and as being core to the whole production and publication process of his work, from the idea to the bookshelf.

Most major authors in early twentieth century China were also engaged in translating foreign works. Nicolai Volland notes the prevalence of this dual role amongst the most famous literati and the influential role of the author-translator at this time, being "at the forefront in defining the direction and the shapes of modernity in China, spearheading the introduction of new ideas and providing models from abroad."[11] Despite the fact that Lu Xun once commented that "Neither publishers nor readers like translations," he himself was prolific in the field, translating into Chinese from either original or translated works in Japanese and German.[12] The prefaces to his translations constitute over two thirds of the tenth volume of his collected works.[13]

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[11] Volland, "The Birth of a Profession", 126.

[12] This comment, (*chubanzhe he duzhede bu xihuan fanyi shu* 出版者和读者的不喜欢翻译书) comes from the 1934 essay "In memory of Wei Suyuan 憶韋素園君", originally published in Vol 3, issue 4, of *Wenxue*.

[13] Lennart Lundberg has collated a total of 208 translated works by Lu Xun. These are mainly either translated directly from Japanese and German (both of which Lu Xun knew well, having spent seven years in Japan, and having learned German as a young man in Nanjing) or retranslated, eg from German versions of Russian and East European language. He knew some English and Russian but does not appear to have been able to translate from these directly. Works of Russian writers account for around half of the entire corpus of Lu Xun's translations.

In 1909 Lu Xun attempted to launch a series entitled *Foreign Short Stories* (Yuwai xiaoshuo ji 域外小說集), which provides an example (one of many) of how he sees translation as part of his broader idea that the purpose of literary endeavour is to bring benefit to humanity. In a 1920 preface to a reprinted edition of these, he states:-

> When we studied in Japan, we had a vague hope that literature and art would be able to change people's minds and reform society. Because of this opinion we naturally thought of introducing new foreign literature. But for this project we needed first knowledge, secondly comrades, thirdly time, fourthly capital, and fifthly readers. The fifth thing we could not foresee, the four others we lacked almost completely; and so naturally we could only start on a small scale with a first attempt, and the result was the translation and printing of Foreign Short Stories.
>
> Our plan at the time was to collect capital for publishing two volumes and later to have number three and four printed when the books were sold and our capital recovered; and so on indefinitely.[14]
>
> 我們在日本留學時候，有一種茫漠的希望：以為文藝是可以轉移性情，改造社會的。因為這意見，便自然而然的想到介紹外國新文學這一件事。但做這事業，一要學問，二要同志，三要工夫，四要資本，五要讀者。第五樣逆料不

(*Lu Xun as a Translator*, 1989). Nicolai Volland notes however that despite this abundance of translation work, the only edition of the *Lu Xun quanji* to contain all his translations was published in 1973. (Volland, "The Birth of a Profession", 131 fn. 12).

[14] In the text this preface is attributed to Zhou Zuoren, but according to Lundberg was written by Lu Xun. The fact it is included in the various Lu Xun anthologies also supports this. I have used Lundberg's translation here. Ibid., 50.

> 得，上四樣在我們卻幾乎全無：於是又自然而然的只能小本經營，姑且嘗試，這結果便是譯印《域外小說集》。　當初的計畫，是籌辦了連印兩冊的資本，待到賣回本錢，再印第三第四，以至第 X 冊的。[15]

The above quote demonstrates both Lu Xun's idealistic approach to his enterprise of translating foreign works into Chinese, and also (even at this early stage in his career) his understanding and engagement with the whole business of translation, from textual work to printing. He acknowledges the need for readers to complete the circuit, but also seems to believe they are too elusive to consider in any concrete form. However, despite being reluctant to predict the scale of his readership, he nevertheless demonstrates a clear opinion of what they needed to know. Discussing his work as a translator of foreign works into Chinese, Lundberg notes, "he never tried to make any systematical or representative introduction of world literature, or of the literature of a single country or a single author's works. Instead, his attention was on what might be valuable and useful to his audience in the actual situation at that time."[16] When Lu Xun wrote about himself it was, again to quote Lundberg, "more as a point of departure for talking of more general problems…he often picks the imaginative and striking detail…rather than giving a systematic account. Only a few times does he describe his spiritual development, and then only shortly and roughly."[17] The implication in this however is not self-deprecation but on the contrary that Lu Xun saw himself as an established figure, who needed no introduction and could be used as a point of reference to discuss weightier topics.

When Lu Xun turns to consider the presumed international readership for his works, his persona takes on a new, global authority. In the 1936 preface to the Czech translation of *Call to Arms,*

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[15] *Lu Xun xuba ji*, 202-204.

[16] Lundberg, *Lu Xun as a Translator*, 10.

[17] Ibid., 27.

dated 21 July,[18] Lu Xun is clearly addressing his new readership directly, and as a nation, and alludes to grand aspirations for his book, as a means to promote cross-cultural understanding. He uses the first person to construct his role of cultural diplomat and spokesperson for China (eg with statements such as "I remember that after the War, when many new nation-states emerged, we were delighted, because as a nation we had also once been oppressed"). Czechoslovakia is addressed directly both in political terms, with the discussion of the nation's "rise" out of oppression, and in human terms, with him noting that he has never met a single Czech person, and referring directly to 'my Czech readers' at the end. In a note that seems almost to evoke those social occasions where small talk turns to desperation to find something in common with a new acquaintance, he even recalls that he once saw some Czech glass ornaments, several years previously, in Shanghai.

The role of the translator is acknowledged directly and Lu Xun claims to derive more satisfaction from this translation, despite its limited readership, because, he states, "I believe that our two countries, with different ethnicities, physical separation, and infrequent communication, can still understand each other, and be close to each other, because we have both been through suffering, and still are – and at the same time are seeking glory." He clearly feels empowered to take on this role of intercultural ambassador, and this is reflected in his authoritative tone.

An English translation of the 1927 collection of short stories *Wild Grass* was given to the Commercial Press but the draft was destroyed in 1932 in the January 28th incident. Prior to this, Lu Xun did pen a preface for it, dated November 5th 1931,[19] in which he bemoans his inability to read English, apologising that "I hope the translator doesn't mind that I've only done half of what he was hoping for…", and otherwise mainly provides Chinese historical context and states

[18] *Lu Xun xuba ji*, 9.

[19] *Lu Xun xuba ji*, 16.

motivations for writing each of the short pieces in the anthology. Readership is not acknowledged, but then again perhaps the English-speaking readership is a broader and less concrete target group, and one which may be less receptive to Lu Xun's apparent mission in international relations, but it is notable that once again the translator, Feng Yu-sheng, is referred to, and his agency acknowledged. In the 1935 preface to the Japanese translation of *A History of Chinese Fiction*, dated 9th June,[20] Lu Xun again seems to focus more on himself, but yet still relates his writing to the Japanese context, this time focussing on the individual Japanese translator, Masuda Wataru 增田涉君, who was also his friend and who, he says, endured much hardship to complete it. He also acknowledges the generosity of the press with whom he is working.

Taken as a whole, such references to professional colleagues with whom he has collaborated in his literary work, suggest that Lu Xun situates himself as core to the whole international communications circuit, and as an active player within the process of cultural production, rather than being somehow victimised and at the mercy of other agents within it. By adopting multiple roles, as author, translator, and critic, and by his perception of the publishers as equal, he fashions himself as being very much in control of the whole process. He clearly subscribes to the didactic function of literature. In terms of his readership, however, he sees them as, at best, "unpredictable", and where he does refer to readers it is mainly in grand terms of the nation state. Rather than imagining his reader, he appears to be imagining, and fashioning, his own role as international diplomat.

Ba Jin 巴金 (1904-2005) – Readers as Invited Guests

In the preface to an anthology of his own collected prefaces and postfaces, first published in 1981, Ba Jin explains his clearly personal approach to writing prefaces:-

[20] *Lu Xun xuba ji*, 169.

> To be honest, in the past when I wrote prefaces or postfaces, I had two ideas in my mind. The first was to use them as a channel to spread my views, even to inculcate others with them. I did this for fear that readers could not otherwise tell my intention, and I didn't care if I had to do this repeatedly. The second idea was to treat the readers as my friends or close acquaintances. As such, adding a preface or postface was just like opening my front door to welcome some guests, and let them see exactly what I'd prepared for them in my home, so they could then decide whether or not to come in.
>
> 說老實話，我過去寫前言、後記有兩種想法：一是向讀者宣傳甚至灌輸我的思想，怕讀者看不出我的用意，不惜一再提醒，反复說明；二是把讀者當做朋友和熟人，在書上加一篇序或跋就像打開門招呼客人，讓他們看見我家裡究竟準備了些什麼，他們可以考慮要不要進來坐坐。[21]

This excerpt highlights both the importance of the preface for Ba Jin, and his clear wish to engage with his readers via this forum. The image of a warm host inviting guests into his home, showing them what he had specially got ready for them, and them leaving them to make the final decision about whether or not to accept, is strikingly egalitarian, especially in contrast to Lu Xun. The whole of this particular preface is also remarkably personal in tone, referring as it does in a single short paragraph to 'my mind', 'my views', 'my intention', 'my friends', 'my front door' and 'my home.' While this refers to my English translation, and for grammatical reasons there are fewer explicit uses of 我 [I, me] in this section of the original, despite the preference in Chinese to omit pronouns, this preface as a whole uses 我 a striking number of times – a remarkable 72 times in a preface of around 1,500 characters.

[21] Ba Jin, *Xuba ji*, 5.

Ba Jin also regularly wrote prefaces to works he had translated into Chinese (a total of 22 in all are collected in his complete works). These are still surprisingly person-centred, with the emphasis on Ba Jin the translator and his process of coming across this text, or sometimes on the readers, but almost never on the content of the work itself. As an example, in his 1929 preface to his translation of the play "The Skeletons Dance" (*Danco de skeletoj*) by Japanese Esperantist Ujaku Akita 秋田 雨雀 (1883-1962),[22] Ba Jin simply narrates his time in Paris, how he spent much time in bookshops on the banks of the Seine and how one day he happened to pick up a copy of this little book for 2.5 francs. He then devotes a whole paragraph to the scene of him reading this book in the Luxembourg Garden (sitting on a bench, quietly, with the sunlight glistening on the green grass…etc). He then refers to the book itself fairly briefly, before moving on to quote what Akita wrote about the springtime in his own preface to an anthology of children's fairytales by the blind Russian Esperantist, Vasily Eroshenko. The emphasis throughout is clearly on Ba Jin the translator and his process of coming across this text, and on the Esperanto community, rather than the text about which he is writing. Likewise, in his 1930 preface to "On the Eve" by the Polish writer Leopold Kampf (1881-1913)[23] he spends the first paragraph setting the scene about a 15 year old child buying a book and the emotional experience of reading it. Then, in a rather dramatic opening to the next paragraph he reveals that the child was indeed Ba Jin himself, and that the book was an earlier translation of Kampf's play into Chinese. Again, for the rest of the preface he continues to discuss his own state of mind and whether or not it has changed since then and with only perfunctory comment, relating mainly to the exclusion of one section, on the book itself.

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[22] Pseudonym of Tokuzō Akita (秋田 徳三 *Akita Tokuzō*). This preface is collated in Ba Jin, *Xuba ji*, 12.

[23] Ba Jin, *Xuba ji*, 18.

When he does talk about textual issues rather than people, it is generally in terms of the translation process (for example he will often refer to the edition he has used, sometimes comparing editions) or issues relating to secondary criticism of the work – he will sometimes refer to Western critics of the text (but again rarely discussing the content as such) and some of his references are impressively up-to-date.[24] When he is retranslating from a translated version, he will reference (and sometimes quote at length from) his fellow-translator.

The appendix to a recent study of Ba Jin in the role of translator provides a useful and comprehensive overview of all of his translated works. Angel Pino notes that, in total over the course of over 50 years, Ba Jin translated works by 81 authors, of 19 different nationalities.[25] Indeed, Pino notes the clear overlap between Ba Jin as an author and as a translator, in part by way of Ba Jin's own free admission in prefaces that at times he has made changes to the source texts, and even to the extent of his occasional incorporation of (uncredited) extracts from his translations into his own work. Pino rather generously, and probably accurately, links this plagiarism to the fact that Ba Jin insisted he only ever translated works by authors he really respected, describing it as "imitative admiration."[26]

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[24] In 1947 he wrote an afterword for his translation of Oscar Wilde's anthology *The Happy Prince*. He includes translated quotes from various different critics of Wilde's work, and one of the critical works from which he quotes is Hesketh Pearson's *Oscar Wilde: His life and Wit*, which had only been published in 1946 suggesting that Ba Jin was very much on top of the latest scholarship (Ba Jin, *Xuba ji*, 336).

[25] These figures are inclusive of texts not found within the *Ba Jin yiwen quanji*, which includes 59 texts in total. Pino, "Ba Jin as Translator", 31.

[26] Pino, "Ba Jin as Translator", 46.

Ba Jin's preface to an anthology of his own translations into Chinese also makes direct parallels between his dual roles as author-translator. He explicitly adopts a combination of didactic and expressive formulations for both creative writing and translating, stating: "I write articles, and publish works, because I have something that I want to say, and I hope that my pen will do some good for the society I live in. I translate foreign works from previous generations, also simply to express my own innermost thoughts, through others' mouths."[27]

As with Lu Xun, it is instructive to trace how this persona is (re)constructed in prefaces to Ba Jin's own works intended for a foreign readership. In his 1947 preface to the Japanese translation of *Snow*, dated 7 June,[28] Ba Jin states, "I wrote this story for Chinese readers, and I'd never thought at that time that it would be translated into Japanese and placed before Japanese readers. But I imagine that Japanese readers will definitely be able to understand my intention, as ordinary Japanese people's lives are similar to those of ordinary Chinese people – they both suffer greatly." He goes on to discuss his choice of title, and concludes, "For this reason I believe that there is not genuine hatred between the Chinese and Japanese peoples. The fate of these two nations can be linked, and should be. I have written the above for the Japanese translation of *Snow*, translated by xx 静子." While, again like Lu Xun, he is motivated in part by the desire to enhance cross-cultural understanding, and he is certainly politically engaged and ambitious throughout his career, the more personal tone he adopts as his constructed image, along with his conception of the function of the authorial preface, allow him to "imagine", and address, his readers in a less imperious way. He presumes less to be an authority on the history of his target readership, and focuses more on his personal experiences, interspersed with some references to history and politics of his own nation.

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[27] From the authorial preface to the *Ba Jin yiwen xuanji,* 巴金譯文選集, 1.

[28] Ba Jin, *Xuba ji*, 326.

Thirty years later, in his 1977 preface, dated 26 Sept, to the French translation of *Family*,[29] Ba Jin first describes the background historical, political and autobiographical context for his novel before again turning to address the concerns of his new readership. He acknowledges the limitations in addressing a different readership, and his hope to educate them: "French readers will not be familiar with those things in my stories. But they will understand the road we have walked, and will understand how we have transformed from a semi-feudal, semi-colonial old China, to an independent, self-governing, self-strengthening socialist New China. When French readers have read my novel, they may enhance their understanding of us." He then returns to the autobiographical, describing how France was where he began his writing career, and recalls "In 1927 I first came to France and all was new to me, I missed home and was concerned with the fate of my country, and I wrote merely to dispel my loneliness. I stayed for less than two years, and really liked the French lifestyle." Like Lu Xun, Ba Jin takes pains to acknowledge those who helped the publication process, and specifically the translator.

Similarly, his 1978 preface to the French translation of *Garden of Repose*, dated 3 May,[30] which otherwise consists mainly of a reprint from an explanation he wrote for his original 1944 text, providing contextualisation of the story and autobiographical links, is framed with acknowledgement of the readers in France, and his aims to enhance cross-cultural understanding. He begins, "I am delighted that my novel *Garden of Repose* has been translated into French to allow the readers of *Family* to see more clearly how the Chinese feudal land-owning family declined and was destroyed." And in closing he adds, "If from this sad story friends and readers in France can see the old society which we have lived through and better understand the proud and excited spirit of people of the New China who have thrown off their shackles, and our hope

[29] Ba Jin, *Xuba ji*, 466.

[30] Ba Jin, *Xuba ji*, 470.

and determination to realise as a matter of urgency the Four Modernisations, and to warmly shake the hands of friendship we proffer, then, as the novel's author, I can ask for no more."

The 1979 preface to the Romanian translation of *Family*, dated 5 February,[31] follows an almost identical pattern, opening by thanking the translator: "for allowing Romanian readers to understand better how we lived and struggled in such a dark, autocratic and corrupt feudal society, and also to see the nature of the ruins on top of which we began to construct socialism." He then again provides the contextualisation and politically charged background for writing, before returning in conclusion to focus again on his target readers, as equals, and repeating his desire to build understanding across the nations, by use of autobiographical anecdote: "I have never been to Romania, that beautiful land. But I know several stories of Romanian heroes, and have come across excellent Romanian literary works. I have made some good Romanian friends, and often remember the happy days I spent with a Romanian poet in Chekhov's hometown….. If my novel can add an extra tile or brick to the tower of friendship between our two nations, then I will be delighted." Despite never having visited Romania, Ba Jin is nevertheless clearly at some pains to try to address his readers in as personal a way as possible.

A similar format is followed in the 1980 preface to the Italian translation of *Family*, dated 24 June.[32] It opens by focussing on the translator, and addresses the readers directly "Margarita Boask has translated my novel *Family* into Italian, and asked me to write a preface for her translation. I said that I'd written various prefaces for different translation of this novel, and the content was all pretty similar, so best not to write one, and let readers directly read the main text. But, when I heard that this was the third of my novels to be published in Italy, I remembered a couple of things, so let me have a word with my Italian readers." Because of the well-known

[31] Ba Jin, *Xuba ji*, 507.

[32] Ba Jin, *Xuba ji*, 519.

influence on Ba Jin of the execution of two Italian anarchists, Sacco and Vanzetti (he refers to Vanzetti as his teacher and indeed translated some of Vanzetti's work into Chinese), much of the main body of this preface relates to this and to Ba Jin's personal correspondence with Vanzetti while on death row in America, and his thanks and good wishes to his Italian friends.

When prefacing texts translated into Esperanto, addressing the 'readership' directly is less straightforward – without cultural locale or obvious national references to make. Nevertheless, Ba Jin maintains his approach of engaging with his readership as much as possible, by way of autobiographical references, and linking all this to an appeal for increased global understanding. In place of a nation to empathise with, his references here are rather to the Esperanto community. In his 1980 preface to *Autumn in Springtime*, dated 24 March,[33] he notes the influence of Esperanto literature on him, and specifically of the work of the author Julio Baghy's work which he translated from Esperanto into Chinese, and which, "in a moment of excitement" inspired him to use the same title, and same prefatory style, for his own work. He then concludes by referring to Esperanto's global mission of spreading friendship between nations.

For Ba Jin, imagining, and engaging with, his readers is core to the persona he builds in his prefaces. Where these readers are from another country, Ba Jin makes great efforts to acknowledge them, empathise and, as opposed to Lu Xun's authoritative ambassadorial approach, to take on the (arguably equally politicised, and certainly equally constructed) role of the friend.

Yu Hua 余华 (b 1960) -- Texts Without Borders

While the domestic literary context in which Yu Hua emerged was clearly different from that of either Lu Xun or Ba Jin, as one of the most successful Chinese writers of the reform era in terms of both national and international acclaim, the means by which his image is constructed in the

[33] Ba Jin, *Xuba ji*, 514.

paratextual elements of his novels, provides useful insights into how the author-reader-text parameters are negotiated in this new age of global cultural engagement. Unlike my previous two examples, Yu Hua is mostly monolingual, and so, ironically perhaps, is linguistically least connected with the world outside China. His global authorial persona, while being influenced by translations he has read of foreign works, is therefore more unidirectional, and communicates Chinese literature to the West, rather than vice versa. Despite this, Yu Hua is often compared to Lu Xun by his critics,[34] and who indeed in one of his recent books aligned himself explicitly with Lu Xun in terms of his role as public intellectual.[35]

Yu Hua's early successes with violent and explicit descriptions in his short stories in the 1980s made way for what critics often categorise as a new phase in his writing with his first full-length novels, which appeared in the first half of the nineties: *Cries in the Drizzle* 在细雨中呼喊 (Zai xiyu zhong huhan) in 1991; *To Live* 活着 (Huozhe) in 1992; and *Chronicle of a Blood Merchant* 許三觀賣血記 (Xu Sanguan mai xueji) in 1995. For the purposes of this short study, I am focussing mainly on the authorial prefaces he provided for these three best-sellers to consider how the author-reader-text is negotiated in the contemporary era, and particularly when the author himself is not also engaged in translation work.

Looking first at his original prefaces for his works, it is clear that Yu Hua has a different conception of the function of this particular paratext. In his 1998 preface to the reprinted edition of *Cries in the Drizzle*, dated 11 October, Yu Hua provides a striking contrast to Ba Jin's image of the preface as a place for author-reader engagement. Yu Hua ostensibly eschews both author and imagined reader, choosing rather to focus on his text, the characters of his novel, and the

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[34] See eg Y.H. Zhao, "Fiction as Subversion", 415.

[35] Yu Hua, *China in Ten Words*, Chapter 5. The whole of this chapter is dedicated to Yu Hua's personal experience and responses to Lu Xun.

published work itself. He portrays the characters with agency independent of his creation, and describes the preface as being a date between them and him, and also between this book and earlier editions. He begins:

> An authorial preface is normally a date, which is, amidst the endless memories, a confirmation of those places which disappear in an instant, a date with narratives which have emerged in the past, or you could say a date with his own past. This authorial preface is no exception, and so it first becomes a meeting with time, a date with 1998 and 1991; after this, it is a date between the author and the characters in the book….In this way, I meet again with a family, and meet again with what they see and hear, and with their joys and sorrows. I feel that I am gradually entering their lives, sometimes I am lucky enough to hear the voices of their inner beings, their sighs and their shouts, their weeping and their laughter.
>
> 作者的自序通常是一次約會，在漫漫記憶裡去確定那些轉瞬即逝的地點，與曾經出現過的敘述約會，或者說與自己的過去約會。本篇序言也不例外，於是它首先成為了時間的約會，是一九九八年與一九九一年的約會；然後，也是本書作者與書中人物的約會... 就這樣，我和一個家庭再次相遇，和他們的所見所聞再次相遇，也和他們的歡樂和痛苦再次相遇。我感到自己正在逐漸地加入到他們的生活之中，有時侯我幸運地聽到了他們內心的聲音，他們的嘆息喊叫，他們的哭泣之聲和他們的微笑。[36]

He goes on to discuss the characterisation of his novel in some detail, but from the point of view of an outsider interpreting and reacting to the characters – clearly and consciously from the perspective of the reader rather than that of the author. Yu Hua ends the preface by returning to

[36] Yu Hua, *Zai xiyu zhong huhan*, 1-3.

this theme that once he has created characters they take on a life of their own, blurring the boundaries between fiction and reality. He claims that in the seven years since he created them they have constantly reappeared before him, haunting him and causing him anxiety as he hears their footsteps approaching or knocking on his door. His closing statement combines the blurring of the real and fictive of Zhuangzi's butterfly trope with the anxiety of the author/creator: "This has gradually started to make me uneasy, for as the characters I have created become increasingly real, I can't help doubting whether my own actual reality is fictitious." In sum, then, Yu Hua's only conceptualisation of his readership in this preface is as an abstract constituency of which he is an equal participant. After the creative act is over, he relinquishes any authority over the work, and reconstructs himself as a reader. He does not address his readers directly, preferring to direct his attention and remarks on the book and the characters within it.

In line with this apparent neglect of his actual readers, Yu Hua is insistent that writers only write for themselves. He elaborates further on this angle in the preface to his next, and perhaps most famous novel, *To Live*. In this preface, dated 27 July 1993,[37] he frames his approach initially within the *xie fen* tradition of writing, but constructs an unusual position within it, by portraying himself as both angry (*fennu* 憤怒) but yet cold and detached (*lengmo* 冷漠). The classical notion of an author giving vent to their rage is anything but detached, with some of the more extreme proponents within this tradition designating any writing which did not originate from intense passion to be worthless. Later, Yu Hua continues, his indignation faded, and he now describes a quite innovative conceptualisation of the function of writing: "The mission of an author is not to vent emotion (fa xie 發洩), not to accuse or expose, he should display a kind of refinement. The

[37] Yu Hua, *Huozhe*, 1-4.

refinement I am talking about here isn't a pure kind of beauty, but a kind of detachment after understanding everything, looking equally at good and evil, looking at the world with sympathy."

In the preface to the latest of the three novels considered here, dated 10 July 1998, *Chronicle of a Blood Merchant*,[38] Yu Hua expands on his theme of not being held accountable for the creative aspect of his work and this sense of detachment is further emphasised. He now constructs himself entirely in the third person, and claims to be simply a recorder of his characters, rather than their originator, characters who have their own voices, often surprising the author or making him feel inadequate. Much of the preface narrates the details of a contemporary news story which gave rise to the plot. In Yu Hua's world, the author is depicted as "an eavesdropper, a patient, careful, considerate and empathetic eavesdropper." This is, however, a conscious process for Yu Hua, as he "makes great effort to do this and, when he is narrating, he tries to cancel out his own identity as a writer and feels that he should be a reader."

Regardless of whether or not Yu Hua acknowledges or addresses his readers in his prefaces, it is an inescapable fact that in retail terms his books have been hugely successful, both in the domestic market and internationally. Moreover, his apparent reluctance to engage textually with readers certainly does not imply that Yu Hua is entirely aloof from the economic realities of the marketplace, or the mechanics of creating a best-seller. As soon as he'd completed *To Live* even before it went to press, he passed it to the film director Zhang Yimou, and it was released as a film in 1995.[39] His engagement with his readership in this practical and business sense, now extends well beyond the domestic market.

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[38] Yu Hua, *Xu Sanguan maixue ji*, 1-2.

[39] Shuyu Kong has also noted the effect of repackaging and changing publishing company on *To Live* with the initial publisher, Changjiang Art and Literature Publishing House, providing lacklustre promotion and achieving total sales of less than 10,000, over five years. In contrast, in

Yu Hua is one of contemporary China's most translated writers. In a recent speech he noted that his books have now been translated into 35 languages (not including minority Chinese languages).[40] The fact that for every translated edition the author will normally provide a new preface, appears to belie the idea that the reader is a complete irrelevance, as otherwise what would the need be for this continual repackaging? Moreover, later editions of Yu Hua's works in Chinese, such as those by The Writers Publishing House which I am mainly citing from here, regularly include the Chinese version of each of his prefaces to these various translations. Regardless of whether this was Yu Hua's own decision of that of his publisher,[41] the presence of these various articles, each linked to a different version of the text, combines to frame the words of the story, subvert any idea that different readers should be targeted differently, and thereby to produce the image of a truly global author. As the paratextual elements to the text increase in volume, so the sense of Yu Hua as an international brand grows ever stronger.

This then begs the question – if Yu Hua's persona is one which eschews the specific needs of his reader in favour of a focus on the author and characters, how does he engage differently with his

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1998 when the agent Ding Xiaohe championed it and contracted with a newly set up Nanhai Publishing Company, with new cover design/pocket format, covered with quotes from international reviews. This new version, which also capitalised on the success of the film, sold 200,000 copies in its first year. Shuyu Kong, *Consuming Literature*, 76.

[40] "How my books roamed the world." The most recent blurbs to his latest editions suggest that this has now increased to over 40 languages.

[41] Individual agency within this process is not my primary concern here as I am looking rather at how the author's image is constructed through the production of these texts. Given the number of times that Yu Hua's translated prefaces are included in different editions of his works by different publishers, we can assume that at least he does not object to being presented in this way.

new international readership? One clue to this is that Yu Hua fashions himself as a global literary personage primarily by stressing his status as reader and consumer of world literature, rather than as author or producer of it. In an interview response to Julia Lovell on his views on the Nobel Prize, for example, he elects to respond as a reader, rather than a writer: "The Nobel Prize had a big impact on me because a lot of great writers of the twentieth century were translated into Chinese due to their having won the Nobel Prize. So I've always loved the Nobel Prize, I've always thought it was a great literary prize…I chose what I read of twentieth-century literature on the grounds of whether it had won the Nobel Prize or not. The first Kawabata I read was from the Zhejiang selection of Nobel prize-winning works."[42]

This theme of the author as reader whose texts write themselves and then take on a life of their own, recurs throughout Yu Hua's prefaces to his translated editions. In his preface to the Italian edition of *Cries in the Drizzle*, dated 9th August, 1998,[43] he begins: "I once again read through my own words, words of someone much younger than I am today, those words which are full of boldness and self-belief, words which seem to rule the narrative, words which try in a single sentence to sum up an event: today I find them contagious, their rhythm is like the cracking sound made by bamboo stalks on the fire." The rest again continues with a muse on memories and fiction and the interplay between the two, but with a 'world literature' angle: "This is why people love memories so much, like flowing rivers, expansively and timelessly undulating in the different languages of different races, sustaining our life and our reading." He ends this preface, returning to his recurrent theme of being an eavesdropper rather than a creative author: "I have given myself absolute authority over my past, my writing is like constantly picking up the phone, and constantly dialling a random date, to listen in on the speaker of past events from the other end of the line." Expanding on his theme of world literature, five years later, in the preface to the

[42] Lovell, *Politics of Cultural Capital*, 112.

[43] Yu Hua, *Zai xiyu zhong huhan*, 4-5.

Korean translation, dated 26 May 2003,[44] Yu Hua includes international references, but notably not anything which is specific to Korea, or a Korean readership. He begins by quoting the Song dynasty poet Lu You and the Roman poet Horace, and attempting to compare their approaches to the idea that time steals riches. He mentions the ancient Greeks as well. All books narrate memories, Yu Hua says, or use memory as a narrative device. He cites a passage from Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* which describes the embroidery on his pillow becoming the Silk Road connecting China to France. Yu Hua compares Proust's memories to the Greek ideal and finally wonders whether or not he wrote this novel in a similar way to Proust (he says he can't remember as it was twelve years ago). He appears to be writing a preface consciously designed to frame his translated work as 'world literature', while, in contrast to Lu Xun and Ba Jin, neglecting to relate it specifically to his actual readership in Korea.

In his prefaces to translated editions of *To Live*, Yu Hua attempts to 'explain' the book. In the preface to its Korean translation, dated 17 October 1996,[45] he mainly discusses the significance of the title. Unusually, he does acknowledge his readership, with the statement, "I hope readers in Korea can forgive my boldness," in relation to his attempt to do the "difficult task" of explaining the book, and by a mention towards the end of "we Chinese", before concluding with a more typical statement: "Literature is just like that, it relates the things that the author is conscious of and at the same time it relates those he is not conscious of; it is at this point that it is over to the readers to speak." Six years later, his preface to the Japanese translation, dated 17 January 2002,[46] reverts to this model of a more abstract global readership, with multiple references to non-Chinese works, but without any specific reference to his presumed target readership in Japan. He sets the scene by discussing a question Italian secondary school children

[44] Ibid., 6-8.

[45] Yu Hua, *Huozhe*, 5-6.

[46] Ibid, 7-11.

put to him about the book. He then goes on to quote from Horace, Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Tang Dynasty poetry and prose, the American author Isaac Bashevis Singer's, "Gimpel the fool" and the Brazilian João Guimarães Rosa's "The third bank of the river" and also references Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, Sholokhov's *And Quiet Flows the Don* and Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. For these last three he doesn't bother to state the author's name, but appears simply again to be constructing an international literary landscape with which to frame his work. In his preface to the English translation of the same year, dated 26 April 2002,[47] Yu Hua does reference American literature, but in the context of recalling the content of what he wrote in the preface to his original Chinese text, linking back to it, and noting the American literary influences on him as a reader, rather than creator.

It is arguable that the topic of the latest novel in this case study, *Chronicle of a Blood Merchant*, is one which is anchored more in the problems facing contemporary Chinese society and so might invite some extra explanation for a foreign readership.[48] As we have seen, even the preface to the Chinese edition does relate at length the news story which inspired the plot. The preface to the Korean edition of the novel, dated 26 August 1997,[49] states that the book is about equality. It references a twelfth century North African poem, and compares its subject to Xu Sanguan and also cites Aristotle and Heinrich Heine, but once again with no obvious references to Korea or Koreans.

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[47] Ibid., 12-13.

[48] Nevertheless this book has also been well-received overseas, and at time of writing has just been set, in English translation, as one of the two core texts on the Chinese syllabus, by a leading school exam board in the UK.

[49] Yu Hua, *Xu Sanguan maixue ji*, 3-4.

In the editions designed for the European market, however, there are concessions. In the preface to the Italian edition, dated 11 April 1998,[50] he does appear to mould a nation-specific address, but here with the focus firmly on issues of language. He discusses the type of language he uses to write, and compares this directly with Italian: "It's just like Italian coming from Florence – our standard Chinese also comes from a local dialect. The fact that language of Florence became the national language as a result of a great epic poem for us Chinese people is as wondrous as a legend, and makes us surprised and envious." He continues the comparison about power and language, and dialects, noting the vitality of Dante's language in comparison to Latin, then relating this to China. He states that the flexibility of the Chinese language, and his own ability for linguistic compromise, allow him to write. The author-reader relationship, therefore, is grounded solely in the text and comparative concepts of language hierarchies.

Shortly afterwards, in the preface to the German translation, dated 27 June 1998,[51] Yu Hua goes a step further and, as well as a German literary reference, he does make a rare acknowledgement of and address to, his presumed readers. He recalls an individual from his childhood, who was very similar to the protagonist in Xu Sanguan, and notes how when characters are representative of large proportions of the population, this is something that "literature is happy to see". Notably, the example he then gives is rooted within the idea of a truly global literature, "when your Faust is thinking over something, it can let us Chinese feel that we are preparing to make our own choice." The contrast of "your Faust" and "us Chinese" is a noticeable departure from Yu Hua's normal reticence, a nod towards the reader as a human subject, but is thoroughly constructed in literary terms, as a globally aware consumer of world literature.

[50] Ibid., 9-10.

[51] Ibid., 5-8.

The preface to the English edition is dated 27 April 2002,[52] and focuses on relating a contemporary news report about blood-selling in China from the news. In this, one of the later prefaces in my sample, Yu Hua seems to be developing a more comfortable acknowledgement of himself as a writer, but nevertheless this is a role which he still credits to his background as a reader: "I know that it is China's history and reality that has fostered my writing, and given me my writer's body, hands and heartbeat. But literature has given me my writer's eyes, and allowed me to see within twists and turns of events and astounding realities, even deeper and longer lasting things." As well as this final acknowledgement of his writerly identity, he also locates this in the broader literary infrastructure and communications circuit. He talks about the publisher a lot and how delighted he is to publish with Random House, as this had been a long-cherished wish of his. He thanks his translator, agent and also Ha Jin whom he has never met but who recommended him to Random House.

As clear evidence of the on-going branding of Yu Hua as a globally significant author, the most recent publications of the novels, by The Writers Publishing House, not only once again include reprints of all the authorial prefaces he has written for the various translated versions, but also add a several page appendix to each with translated quotes of reviews of the work from international publications. The blurb on the back cover has a short statement about the author's date of birth and the names of his main novels, but then goes on to list all the languages his works have been translated into, and finally the international prizes that he has been awarded.

In comparison to Lu Xun and Ba Jin, Yu Hua is living in a world which is far more interconnected. His self-construction within his prefaces is less likely to refer to national

[52] This preface is strangely not included in the Zuojia cbs edition (normally the most comprehensive publisher) but is included in the earlier edition by Shanghai wenyi cbs, 2004, 12-13. I have therefore included both editions in the references list.

concerns of the target language-speakers, but rather to more generalised global issues. While this could be construed as being because he is less informed about the specific country he is writing too, it is more likely that he is less concerned about such national boundaries. Yu Hua himself regularly attends international bookfairs, author events and workshops all over the world and has even had a column in *The New York Times*. His global success is perhaps even more surprising given that, unlike increasing numbers of contemporary Chinese writers, he is monolingual and so relies on translators and interpreters.

In the 25 years since he first wrote of how he only ever wrote for himself, Yu Hua now provides a rather less idealistic description, acknowledging the need for an infrastructure of translators, publishers and readers in order to allow his books to reach a global readership. He doesn't display the same masterly overview of the communications circuit that Lu Xun possessed, and describes some aspects of it quite passively, without any expectation that he would have any control of the situation, but there is a marked shift to an acknowledgement of his text's journey after its birth, and the importance of the various agents who facilitate this.

> Looking back on how my books have roamed the world, I see there are three factors: translation, publication and readers. I've noticed that in China discussions about Chinese literature in a world context focus on the importance of translation, and of course, translation is important, but if a publisher doesn't publish, then it doesn't matter how good a translation is, if it's going to be locked in a drawer, old-style, or, these days, stored on a hard drive. Then there are the readers. If a publisher publishes a book, and the readers don't pick up on it, then the publisher will lose money and won't want to publish any more Chinese literature. So, these three factors – translation, publication and readers – are all essential.
>
> 回顧自己的書遊蕩世界的經歷，就是翻譯-出版-讀者的經歷。我注意到國內討論中國文學在世界上的境遇時經常只是強調翻譯的重要性，翻譯當然重要，可

是出版社不出版，再好的譯文也只能鎖在抽屜裡，這是過去，現在是存在硬盤裡，然後是讀者了，出版後讀者不理睬，出版社就賠錢了，就不願意繼續出版中國的文學作品。所以翻譯-出版-讀者是三位一體，缺一不可。

In the same presentation, Yu Hua is insistent that there is little difference between readers of different countries, preferring as ever to focus on the text, rather than either author or reader. He uses the questions that he is asked by readers as an example, and states that in fact readers both in China and overseas ask him very similar questions. He puts this down to the nature of literature and its mysterious power. In many ways, this passage is a return to the concept of World Literature at its most idealistic.

At its heart, literature is literature, whether it's Chinese or foreign, and what concerns readers most are the things that belong to literature: the characters, their fate and the story. If we're talking about the novel itself, then I don't think there's any difference between the questions asked by Chinese readers and foreign readers. If there are differences, they are between individual readers. For us Chinese, when we read foreign literature, what is it that draws us in? Very simply, it's literature. As I've said before, if there is a mysterious power in literature, then it's the power that allows us to read about our own feelings in works by authors of different periods, different ethnic groups, different cultures, and different histories.

但是文學歸根結底還是文學，無論是在中國還是在外國，讀者最為關心的仍然是人物、命運、故事等這些屬於文學的因素。只要是談論小說本身，我覺得國外讀者和國內讀者的提問沒有什麼區別，存在的區別也只是這個讀者和那個讀者的區別。當我們中國讀者閱讀外國文學作品時，吸引我們的是什麼？很簡單，就是文學。我曾經說過，假如文學裡真的存在神秘的力量，那就是讓讀者

在不同時代、不同民族、不同文化、不同歷史的作家的作品中讀到屬於自己的感受。[53]

Conclusion

A comparison of the function of authorial prefaces to the works of these three hugely influential writers, can be representative of a shift, over the course of the twentieth century, in the perception of both the range of functions of the authorial preface and, more broadly, what it means to be a writer for the world. Lu Xun sees the preface as a vehicle to present his sometimes grandiose aspirations, and to further his mission for literature and translated literature to be a cure for the nation's ills. His notion of his international readership, where referred to at all, is framed in the political and national rather than the personal. For Ba Jin the function of a preface is quite different, and is an invitation to readers. Even where he explicitly adopts the didactic stance of literature as conduit for cross-cultural communication, this is still framed in the notion of the individual reader, whose fears, preferences and concerns are central to Ba Jin's motivation. Yu Hua on the other hand sees the function of the preface in textual terms, describing it as a date with his characters. He presents himself as a reader rather than producer of world literature. The shift in objective for this paratext may be indicative of a diminishing of the authority of the writer and a less hierarchical repackaging of writer as reader.

The contrasting approaches to the preface between Yu Hua and his predecessors discussed above, provide an interesting (if unconscious) mirror to the shifts in conceptualisations of world literature, from being a "literary United Nations", to being a "mode of reading and circulation". Defining world literature from the viewpoint of the reader and the dissemination of texts, seems to be dependent on consumers being in a position to choose to read certain texts, and with a desire to 'expand their horizons' beyond the obvious canon. For people educated in China, and

[53] Yu Hua, "How my books roamed the world". The translation here is Helen Wang's.

perhaps more generally in non-Anglophone systems, this may sound like a rather spurious and redundant aspiration. While the debates and developments in the field of world literature seem to have moved in the direction from text to author to reader, it is possible that this trajectory may still largely be conceived from an Anglophone perspective, and for twentieth century Chinese authors and readers, who have been engaging with world literature for longer, often out of necessity, and within a different, and changing, global power dynamic, the shift over this period was ultimately the reverse – namely away from the individual creator and consumer of the story, and back to the text itself.

Having said that, in the increasingly borderless world of the twenty-first century, in the prefaces to his more recent works, including post-2000 editions of these three novels, and in his interviews and presentations, Yu Hua appears now to be reconstructing himself as a far more confident global cultural producer, even providing advice to others about how to approach writing itself.

As the communications circuit is globalised, so the author's position within it is reconstrued. To be an active manager of the cultural production process, to be accepted as a professionalised cultural entrepreneur as Lu Xun and Ba Jin were, requires a certain degree of knowledge and oversight of all aspects of the writing and international publication process. In Yu Hua's early life, without having too much contact with the world outside China, he constructs himself primarily as a reader. As he becomes increasingly internationalised, with foreign book tours, appearances and lectures, so his self-fashioning becomes more similar to his predecessors, as actively engaged with, and with a clear voice over, the whole journey of his texts, from story to book, from China to the global stage.

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