Translational Stages: Chinese Theatrical Modernism

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Translational Stages: Chinese Theatrical Modernism
by
Annelise Finegan Wasmoen

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**She Stoops to Compromise in Translation**: Productions in China (1935–6)

**Translational theater**: "It doesn't matter what language it was written in"

**Performances in Beijing and Shanghai**: "modern drama urged fervently"

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Translational Stages is dedicated to the Finegans. My father gave access to research materials, my mother proofread, and my siblings Sean, James, Kerith, Russell, and Gloria helped in many other ways.

Annelise Finegan, May 2021
Translation in relation to theater is understudied and seldom theorized. This dissertation shows that connecting the two practices through historical examples promotes new ways of looking at what is conventionally called intercultural theater. By translation in relation to theater, I refer to the complex and related processes of the interlingual translation of scripts, the intersemiotic translation of script to stage, and the intrasemiotic translation between theatrical forms. The Chinese genre of theater known as huaju 话剧 in the decades studied here, the 1910s to 1930s, has been described as borrowed from the Western naturalist or realist stage, but I recast it instead as a translated form. The emergence of huaju as a cultural response to modernization on the global stage allows for this theatrical form to be reconsidered as an example of theatrical modernism, while illustrating deep and overlooked connections between translation and theater. *Translational Stages: Chinese Theatrical Modernism* also acts as a project of historical recovery for theater artists who have not been the subject of significant critical appreciations, or at least not for their theatrical activities. By excavating the pathbreaking work of Chen Dabei 陈大悲 (1887–1944), Lin Huiyin 林徽因 (Phyllis Whei-yin Lin, 1904–55), and John Wong-Quincey (Wang Wenxian 王文显, 1886–1968) alongside their various investments in translation and their
connections to contemporary American theater, I establish the foundations for a comparative study of *huaju* and reconfigure the standard critical narrative of the form's development.
Introduction

Translation in relation to theater is understudied and seldom theorized. It will be the work of this dissertation to show that connecting the two practices through historical examples promotes new ways of looking at what is conventionally called intercultural theater. By translation in relation to theater, I refer to the complex and related processes of the interlingual translation of scripts, the intersemiotic translation of script to stage, and the intrasemiotic translation between theatrical forms, or how forms of theater, as itself a signifying system, move across cultural settings through a form of translation. The Chinese genre of theater known as huaju话剧 in the decades studied here, the 1910s to 1930s, has been described as borrowed from the Western naturalist or realist stage, but I will recast it instead as a translated form. The emergence of huaju as a cultural response to modernization on the global stage allows for this theatrical form to be reconsidered as an example of theatrical modernism, while illustrating deep and overlooked connections between translation and theater.

Translational Stages: Chinese Theatrical Modernism also acts as a project of historical recovery for theater artists who have not been the subject of significant critical appreciations, or at least not for their theatrical activities. By excavating the pathbreaking work of Chen Dabei 陈大悲 (1887–1944), Lin Huiyin 林徽因 (Phyllis Whei-yin Lin, 1904–55), and John Wong-Quincey (Wang Wenxian 王文显, 1886–1968) alongside their various investments in translation and their connections to contemporary American theater, I will establish the foundations for a comparative study of huaju and reconfigure the standard critical narrative of the form's development.
Background

Theatrical experimentation in China over the past hundred-plus years has reflected responses to social and cultural changes; often theater has been harnessed as a vehicle to promote these changes. Chinese language theater's historical development in the twentieth century features a central distinction between two broad categories of staged, generally scripted, performance: *xiqu* 戏曲 or "traditional drama" and *huaju* 话剧 or "spoken drama." *Xiqu* encompasses the numerous regional forms characterized by a synthesis of singing, recitation, dance, and acrobatics in which performers specialize in particular categories of roles, with a history stretching back to the Song dynasty (960–1279) if not earlier. Many *xiqu* performance spaces were open-air or open on three sides, so that the audience viewed the action from many different angles and sometimes from various levels of raised seating. The stage was sparsely decorated with a few stage properties such as a table, a chair, a carpet on the floor, and a curtain at the back. *Huaju* emerged in the early decades of the twentieth century and is most often defined, in distinction to *xiqu*, by its focus on dialogue, characters who do not fall into categorical role types, and an acting style intended to reflect natural movements—a stylized realism—instead of the conventional gestures used in *xiqu*. Especially in the first half of the twentieth century, *huaju* observed conventions drawn from contemporary Western theater such as the fourth wall, proscenium stage, and realistically detailed sets. In the study of Chinese theater *huaju* is generally treated as synonymous with "modern Chinese drama," an equation that consigns *xiqu* as traditional drama to the past. The contradiction is immediately apparent: *xiqu* is a contemporary performance form that itself evolved significantly over the course of the past century, with a continuing popularity that eclipsed that of *huaju* in most periods. Instead, *huaju*
should be seen as a stylistic subset within a broader theatrical culture rather than in isolation from xiqu. Both have been the ground for experimentation in form and content, with many pathbreaking and thought-provoking experiments in Chinese language theater of the past century depending on a convergence of the two, while theatrical works were adapted back and forth between huaju and various xiqu forms from the start.

Huaju itself can be seen as a long-running formal experiment that began in response to a crisis of theatrical representation. My research demonstrates that huaju develops out of a complex of aesthetic responses to increasing exposure to modernization. This exposure took place through the incursions of imperialism from European nations, the United States, and Japan, as well as through the observations of Chinese students, professionals, and artists abroad in the final decades of the Qing (1644–1911) and early decades of the Republic of China. I use the phrase "crisis of representation" in full view of its association with modernism on the Europe-centered model. Further, I would suggest that huaju continues to be a rich field for comparative study because its performers, directors, and playwrights were almost always thinking about their work comparatively, even if, in light of Western and Japanese imperialism, this comparison was sometimes forced.

Translation, in several senses of the word, has been a central vehicle of scripts for huaju performances throughout the twentieth century, especially in the last years of the Qing dynasty, the early Republican period, and following the end of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966–76). However, theatrical productions based on these translations are often discussed as adaptations in a general sense, without attention to the process of linguistic transfer and the formal changes that take place during the process. I use 'translation' as a way of describing both processes, extending the typology of translation outlined by Roman Jakobson in "On Linguistic
Aspects of Translation": interlingual translation of theatrical scripts or of other texts used to script performance from one language to another and intersemiotic translation from script to stage. A further mode of intralingual translation addresses both linguistic change (which often takes place in response to interlingual translation) and translation as rewording within a single language on the basis of a crib or other intermediary source. Additionally, the mode of intrasemiotic translation (a supplement to Jakobson's schema) can be used as a way of understanding changes in theatrical form: for example, the process by which huaju developed with elements from Western stage drama, xiqu, and wenmingxi 文明戏 or "civilized drama."\(^1\) I will argue that the development of huaju cannot be fully understood without recourse to the role played by translation.

Narratives of Early Twentieth-Century Chinese Huaju (Spoken Drama)

Hong Shen 洪深 (1894–1955) has been credited with originating the term huaju by combining hua (speech) with ju (drama) in 1928, although the term also appeared in a 1922 advertisement written by Chen Dabei for his acting school discussed in Chapter One. Hua also meant "story" and signaled an emphasis on telling new stories rather than the performance of older, highly familiar stories that characterized xiqu. Prior to this, the term xinju 新剧 or "new theater" was also deployed. Wenmingxi, a performance form initially used for staging political debate and performed in both scenario- and script-based styles, found brief commercial success in the second half of the 1910s with melodramatic family dramas but was later omitted from canonical versions of huaju history. The late 19\(^{th}\) and early 20\(^{th}\) centuries also saw a lively scene...

\(^1\) Wenmingxi itself is another example of intrasemiotic translation, here from Western stage drama, xiqu, and Japanese shinpa 新派, with shinpa itself yet another intrasemiotic translation of Western stage drama and Japanese kabuki 歌舞伎.
of amateur theater among Chinese students, especially those who saw performances of Western plays in the foreign-controlled concession areas or who performed plays by Shakespeare as part of their English-language curriculum in Christian schools. This amateur theater of the 1910s and 1920s was another early form of spoken drama later absorbed within the huaju label.

Calls for social, political, and cultural reform and revolution were entwined with proposals for the reform of xiqu in the late Qing and then for replacing xiqu with huaju in the early Republican period in order to promote reforms beyond the reading public. In the pro-Westernization, pro-modernization discourse of the New Culture Movement in the mid-1910s through the 1920s, calls for reform of culture via reform of theater were also prominent, most notably the essay "Ibsenism" (Yibusheng 易⼘⽣) by Hu Shi 胡适 (1891–1962) published in June 1918 in volume 4, number 6 of New Youth (Xin qingnian 新青年, La Jeunesse) devoted to the Norwegian playwright, along with a translation of A Doll's House (Et dukkehjem, 1879) under the title Nora (Nuola 娜拉).

In an anthologizing project in the mid-1930s and a canonization movement in the mid-1950s, the various forms of new theater were subsumed within the narrative that defined "new" literature and theater as that instigated by the New Culture Movement, which advocated for an iconoclastic break from the traditional past through turning to the West for inspiration. In 1935 an enterprising editor named Zhao Jiabi 赵家璧 compiled a ten-volume Compendium of the New Chinese Literature (Zhongguo xin wenxue daxi 中国新文学大系) that contributed significantly to the canonization of the "new literature" of the years 1917–27 in a way that broadly influenced future study of this period. The editor for the drama volume, Hong Shen, posited that the origin of modern Chinese drama could be traced to the one-act Greatest Event in Life (Zhong shen da shi 终身大事) by Hu Shi, published in March 1919 in New Youth. In 1957 the other two men
credited as the founders of modern Chinese drama, Tian Han 田汉 (1898–1968) and Ouyang Yuqian 欧阳予倩 (1898–1962), constructed a retrospective of fifty years of huaju which added a prehistory dating to 1907, when Chinese students in Japan staged scenes from La Dame aux camélias by Alexandre Dumas, fils, and an adaptation of Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin. By the time of the 'huaju centenary' celebrated in 2007, the by-then conventional signposts familiar to scholars and students of Chinese huaju were firmly in place: originating with the 1907 student productions in Japan, developing in the 1920s as shaped by Hu Shi's introduction of "Ibsenism," reaching artistic maturity with "China's Shakespeare," Cao Yu 曹禺 (1910–96), in the 1930s, and achieving naturalized status as a quintessentially Chinese form in Lao She's 老舍 (1899–1966) 1957 Teahouse (Chaguar 茶館). The main outlines of this official narrative are deeply ingrained in the study of Chinese theater of the 20th century. The primary historical intervention here, in Translational Stages: Chinese Theatrical Modernism, will be revisiting the middle period of huaju's development, from 1919 to 1935, within this broader chronology.

The "reigning paradigm" of the May Fourth uprising as the start of modern Chinese fiction reinforced by the Compendium has since been reexamined by foundational studies such as David Der-wei Wang's Fin-de-Siècle Splendor (1997), which brings to light the "repressed modernities" of the last half-century of the Qing dynasty. The founding mythology of modern Chinese drama has been similarly questioned by Xiaomei Chen in Acting the Right Part (2002) with attention to the movement to reform xiqu spearheaded in 1902 by inveterate reformer Liang Qichao 梁启超 (1873–1928) while in political exile in Japan. This reform came not from the realm of theater practice, but rather as part of an explicit nation-building project based on ideals of Western enlightenment and democracy which would be spurred by mass education through
popular literature. Liang would attempt to put his principles of theater reform into practice, at least on paper, in *New Rome* (*Xin Luoma* 新罗马, 1902), a partially-completed play in *chuanqi* 传奇 or "romance drama" form about the founding of the nation of Italy featuring Dante as a figure who provides a guide to the action, along with Shakespeare and Voltaire. Liang's experiment with new content in existing *xiqu* form was widely read, even though it seems never to have been produced, and the harnessing of theater for nationalistic social and political reform remained influential. Chen notes that Liang's exact phrasing in his call to "act out real-life dramas in history in timely and magnificent fashion" would be revisited in promotion of the model plays of the Cultural Revolution.² More recently Siyuan Liu has re-excavated the foundations of modern drama in the last years of the Qing and first decade of the Republic of China with particular attention to *wenmingxi*, the theatrical form, primarily dialogue-based, that drew aesthetically from "Western spoken theatre, classical Chinese theatre, and a Japanese hybrid form of kabuki and Western-style spoken theatre called *shinpa*."³ Liu argues that this "hybridized" form of theater, omitted from Hong Sheng's 1935 anthology, has been written out of Chinese theater history because it fails to fit the traditional/modern model.

One might ask why the official narrative of *huaju* canonized in the 1930s by Hong Shen and again in the 1950s by Ouyang Yuqian and Tian Han would focus on the 1907 student productions in Japan, with particular attention to the Spring Willow Society (*Chunliu she* 春柳社) staging of *The Black Slaves' Cry to Heaven* (*Heinu yutian lu* 黑奴吁天录), especially when the same play (in a different adaptation) was staged in Shanghai the same year. This may be

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partly due to Ouyang having been a member of the Spring Willow Society, but perhaps also because the Shanghai production took place both within pre-Republican China and at the Lyceum in the French Concession, literally on a Western stage, and one seldom frequented by the Chinese residents of the city. The choice of this story, and its adaptation, exemplifies the dynamics of failure and nationalism with regard to race in this period discussed by Jing Tsu, with the experience of slaves in America taken as prefiguring what might happen to the Chinese people without a strong national foundation. As Tsu argues, this "cultural logic of failure" both shares and rejects "identification with the subjugated races." Like many plays of the *huaju* repertoire, *Black Slaves' Cry to Heaven* was both a translation and an adaptation, based on a translation of Harriet Beecher Stowe's 1852 novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Lin Shu 林纾 (1842–1924), whose efforts to preserve the use of classical Chinese and conservative Confucian morality were attacked by the "new literature" writers at the same time as his translations were used for much of their imaginative fodder. The already loose translation was revised by Zeng Xiaogu into five acts, omitting most of the narrative of Uncle Tom's death and focusing on George Harris as the hero. Lin Shu had made the link between Stowe's slaves and the fate of the Chinese people directly in his preface to the translation, describing the American mistreatment of Chinese laborers, and writing "I take the tears I shed for the black to weep for the yellow people." The student society in Tokyo revised the story in such a way as to experience vicariously both oppression and self-liberation. The centrality of these themes, what Tsu calls "feared inferiority" (the possibility of being enslaved) and "reassuring distance" (allowed by

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6 Quoted in Tsu, *Failure, Nationalism, and Literature*, 62.
sympathy or contempt for those who are enslaved) would be revisited on both the fiftieth and centenary anniversaries of the 1907 founding of huaju. In 1957 Ouyang, who played a female slave child in the 1907 production, restaged the play as *The Hatred of the Black Slaves* (*Heinu hen* 黑奴恨), with the Spring Willow production's promotion of Chinese pride and nationalism reworked into an even stronger anti-American diatribe, in keeping with Chinese foreign policy of the 1950s, with the white and black characters rendered absolutely evil or good. Nick Rongjun Yu's 喻荣军 (b. 1971) 2007 centenary celebration play titled *Cry to Heaven* (*Yu tian* 呼天) alternates between scenes from *Uncle Tom's Cabin*—in this case following the plot of Stowe's novel more closely—and set pieces in which a character called simply "Actor" meets with major figures of huaju history while giving a decade-by-decade recapitulation of its development.7

Setting the start of huaju history at the 1907 Spring Willow productions thus provided a nation-building context. The work declared the first modern Chinese play, Hu Shi's 1919 *Greatest Event in Life*—the event is marriage—establishes many of the themes central to the May Fourth cultural movement: discarding traditional values, focusing on individual determination, free love (meaning freedom of choice in marriage), the figure of the liberated woman, writing in the vernacular, and all of these in the context of Westernization. The play's single extended scene takes place in a Westernized Chinese home, with the author carefully noting that the decorations include both Chinese calligraphy and Dutch landscapes. A young woman, Tian Yamei (Ah-May), discovers that both of her parents are opposed to her marrying a certain Mr. Chen, who waits outside for her in his car the entire play. Her mother believes a fortune-teller's claim that the marriage will not be happy; her father, while eschewing

superstition, adheres to the traditional Confucian view that prohibits persons of the same
surname from marrying and argues that the names Tian and Chen had been pronounced or
written the same way some 2500 years ago. Yamei receives a note from her absent paramour
reading "This concerns us alone. Decide for yourself." ("此事只关系我们两人，与别人无关，你
该自己决断") and decides to leave. Yamei is the very image and model of the progressive "new
woman" (xin nüxing 新女性), often symbolized by Ibsen's Nora, championed by May Fourth
writers. However, as Katherine Hui-ling Chou details in *Performing China: Actresses,*
*Performance Culture, and Visual Politics, 1910-1945* (2004), the discourse of this "new woman"
constructed by men was in many respects superficial, as seen when Yamei leaves home after
receiving support from her boyfriend and proceeds directly into his car. Chou has more broadly
explored the difficulties of women actors of both stage and screen as the objects of admiration
but also voyeurism in the longer May Fourth period, as seen with the film actress Ruan Lingyu
阮玲玉 (1910–35) who played new women figures and committed suicide shortly after
portraying the life of actress and playwright Ai Xia 艾霞 (1912–34) in a movie titled *New
Woman.*

Hu Shi's *Greatest Event* was also the play used in 1923 by Hong Shen, fresh from George
Pierce Baker's English 47 theater workshop at Harvard, as part of an experiment intended to
'naturalize' the alignment between the gender of the character and actor. Actors portraying the
opposite sex had appeared in the Chinese stage for centuries, as seen in an elaborate wall
painting of a theatrical troupe led by Zhong Duxiu dating to the 14th century. A ban on actresses
from public stages in Beijing by the Qianlong Emperor in 1772, frequently transgressed in the

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8 Katherine Hui-ling Chou dates this practice to the Tang (617–908), in "Striking Their Own Poses: The
The practice of male actors impersonating women did not soon go out of style, however, and both the *wenmingxi* and early *huaju* were performed almost exclusively with men in the women roles, including Ouyang Yuqian and, notably, Zhou Enlai, future premier of the People's Republic of China, who would participate in a number of well-known theatrical productions post-1949. Hong Shen wrote an account, published in *Liangyou huabao* 良友画报 in January 1935, of having found such performances "perverse" after his study of Freud. He describes how, in response, he arranged for a double billing of *Greatest Event* and Ouyang Yuqian's 1922 *The Shrew* (*Pofu* 浦妇, first published 1925), sneaking in two women actors to play Yamei and her mother in the first item. When the men dressed as women went onstage in the second play and began to perform, Hong reports, the audience erupted in laughter, bringing an end to this performance practice, at least as far as *huaju* went.\(^9\)

The championing of feminism by Hu Shi and other May Fourth writers seems often to have been a way of using the figure "woman," like the "black slave" of the 1907 Spring Willow productions, as a way of promoting nationalism by proxy: the new woman symbolized the May Fourth's modernization impetus. Ying Hu, in *Tales of Translation* (2000), cites Liang Qichao on the use of gender as a way of signifying difference that could then be applied to the traditional versus the new, a move that "enables the enactment of the modern [...] through the image of the new woman."\(^{10}\) I would point also to the valences introduced by examining Hu Shi's play in its 'first' publication in *New Youth* 6:3, where the script about the new woman is bookended by two

\(^9\) For a recent analysis of this episode, see Megan Ammirati, "Hong Shen and the 'Natural Death' of Female Impersonation," *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 27:2 (2015): 172-207.

complaints by the author about actual women. In the preface, Hu writes that he had written the play in English at the request of (presumably male) Chinese exchange students to stage for their American classmates, but they could not find any women to play the roles. In the afterword, he adds that he had translated it for a group of female Chinese students, but none would perform Yamei's part. These two interpolations create a clear demarcation between the ideal new woman and the condition of the students, at a time when it took bravery for women to act because of the frequent equation, as Chou discusses, of actor and role. This demarcation disappears in later canonizations of Hu's play, allowing Yamei to be interpreted by Chinese audiences and readers primarily as a feminist icon like Nora of Ibsen's Doll House.

Additionally, we learn from these paratexts that Greatest Event is not what it was later purported to be, the first original modern play written in the Chinese vernacular, but rather a back-translation of a script Hu wrote in English and published first in the Peking Leader. Interlingual translation was of course a central vehicle of scripts for huaju performances, as shown in Bernd Eberstein's remarkable bibliography of plays translated into Chinese before 1949, and even that listing does not account for translations staged but not published. Scripts based on translations of fiction, and even on paraphrases of plays, were also a feature of many adaptations. As Alexandra Huang discusses in Chinese Shakespeares: Two Centuries of Cultural Exchange (2009), Shakespeare, despite being a mythologized figure from the 1870s onward, was

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11 Here I am mindful of Michel Hockx's reminder that "[v]irtually every single known literary work of the first half of the twentieth century was first published in a literary journal or newspaper supplement," a factor often overlooked in the scholarship on dramatic literature in this period, although Hockx is referring primarily to the field of modern Chinese fiction; Hockx, Questions of Style: Literary Societies and Literary Journals in Modern China, 1911–1937 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 29.
not translated into Chinese until the first decade of the twentieth century, and even then the translation was of Charles and Mary Lamb's Victorian reduction *Tales from Shakespeare* (again by Lin Shu); 1921 marked the first literal translation of a Shakespeare play, Tian Han's *Hamlet*.

It is also important to remember, again to some degree against the grain of the official *huaju* history, how often theatrical works were adapted back and forth between *huaju* and a number of *xiqu* forms from the start. For example, there is Ouyang Yuqian's *Pan Jinlian* 潘金莲, based on an episode from the classic novel *Water Margin* (*Shuihu zhuan* 水浒传) in which Pan Jinlian and her lover kill her husband, only for the crime to be brutally avenged by Wu Song, fresh from the episode in which he drunkenly kills a tiger with his bare hands. In this retelling of the story, Pan Jinlian falls in love with Wu Song and dies happily at his hands. Ouyang would immediately adapt his 1927 *huaju* into a *Jingju* 京剧 or "Peking opera" and perform in the title role. Stories could move from one form to another in subtler ways, too, as with Ouyang's 1922 *After Returning Home* (*Hui jia yihou* 回家以后), which follows a plot familiar from Yuan dynasty *zaju* 杂剧 as well as recognizable from the Ming dynasty *nanxi* 南戏 or "southern play" *Lute Tale* (*Pipa ji* 琵琶记) by Gao Ming 高明 (c.1306–59). In these stories an impoverished young scholar rises to fame in the imperial examinations and, after being seduced by, or forced to marry, another woman, fails to return, or is prevented from returning, to his longsuffering wife. The results are sometimes a happy reunion and sometimes tragic. Ouyang's version transposes the story into a more modern dilemma, with the young man Lu Zhiping returning from earning his degree at an American university with a new Chinese-American wife in tow. His eminently filial first wife, Wu Zifang, has looked forward to his arrival but decides he is better off with his new wife than a woman like herself who is content to live in the countryside;
Lu Zhiping leaves with weak promises to return. Laikwan Pang in the *The Distorting Mirror* shows that in this same period, *xiqu* performances, especially *Jingju*, were also experimenting with realistic sets (which some critics found "anathema to the artistic values of the traditional opera") and modern dress, both strongly associated with the *huaju* stage.\(^{14}\)

As an alternative to Hu Shi's experiment in vernacular modern theater in *Greatest Event*, with its promotion of May Fourth ideals, we might look to plays by Ding Xilin 丁西林 (1893–1974) such as *Dear Husband (Qin'ai de zhangfu 亲爱的丈夫, 1925)* for a different response to the crisis of representation discernable in the search of theater artists in the opening decades of the century for a radically different theatrical aesthetics. In *Dear Husband* a certain Mr. Yuan visits the home of newlyweds, Mr. and Mrs. Ren. A servant, Liu, insinuates that there is something amiss in the well-tended house. As gradually emerges, pushed to a crisis by the demand of an army general for a command performance, Mrs. Ren is in fact Mr. Huang Fengqing, a famous actor in the "old drama" (*jiu xi 旧戏*, the term used for distinguishing *xiqu* from *xinju* / new drama, which was the term most widely used before *huaju* was adopted); as Liu says, "Our mistress is performed by Huang Fengqing!"\(^{15}\) Huang explains that a group of scholars had gathered in a park in Beijing to discuss whether men and women should be allowed to perform together. Mr. Ren argued, convincing all present, that the question was moot because there are no men or women in the "old plays," only "two kinds of monstrosities," both with bizarre appearances, voices, and gait. Huang decides to play a woman in real life for a while and

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marries him, becoming Mrs. Ren. At the denouement, Huang/Mrs. Ren remains dedicated and concerned about the household minutiae and the progress of Mr. Ren's work as a writer, while he begs him/her to stay. The play ends with Mr. Ren falling asleep in his/her arms, pretending s/he is his mother, while Huang combs his/her hair in a hand mirror. Huang/Mrs. Ren's insistence throughout that s/he is the ideal woman and perfect wife manages, with gentle humor, to criticize the restrictive nature of these roles: Mr. Ren values his wife for embroidery and managing of the home's expenses more than anything else. At the same time, the play stages the ongoing debates not only about how and by whom gender is performed on stage, but also about the changing aesthetics of the stage itself, with the old style of acting suddenly seeming grotesque. In an apparent send-up of the Nora / Yamei trope of the woman leaving the home, Huang/Mrs. Ren keeps counting down the time to his/her departure, but s/he does not leave. A similar joke appears in Ding's play A Wasp (Yi zhi mafeng 一只马蜂, 1923) where a young man complains that the new women are like modern poetry, impossible to understand, while the old type of women are like the stale, rigid forms of the eight-leg essay used in the imperial exams: again we see the mapping of a division between the traditional and modern onto the figure of the new woman.

The 1930s are generally considered the apex of playwriting in the huaju form, especially the trilogy by Cao Yu of Thunderstorm (Leiyu 雷雨, 1935), Sunrise (Richu 日出, 1936) and The Wilderness (Yuanye 原野, 1937). Edward Gunn has shown how during the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–45) huaju reached an unprecedented level of popularity and commercial success in the foreign concessions of Shanghai, which formed the so-called "orphan island" that
was initially free of Japanese interference after the fall of the city. Cao Yu's Thunderstorm, which was touring at the outbreak of the war, was criticized by the emerging left-wing national defense theater movement for focusing on technique instead of life. The play was seen to draw attention away from messages of anti-imperialism and resistance to Japan championed in popular street theater plays such as Put Down Your Whip (Fangxia ni de bianzi 放下你的鞭子), a play so constantly rewritten and adapted that its original derivation as an adaptation of the story of Mignon from Goethe's 1795 Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre was nearly lost. Gunn further suggests that the Japanese were more attentive to the control of film than of theater, and that the "real challenge" for huaju was competition with xiqu. The most popularly successful huaju play was Begonia (Qiu Haitang 秋海棠), based on a novel by Qin Shou'ou 秦瘦鸥 (1908–93) about the tragic life of a Peking opera dan 旦 performer, a man specializing in the role of a young woman. After his face is mutilated by a warlord whose concubine he has impregnated, he raises his daughter and eventually dies onstage in a fit of acrobatic heroics; his stage name Begonia symbolizes China (the begonia leaf, the shape of which resembled the map of China) being torn apart by foreign imperialism (caterpillars). David Der-wei Wang, in his reading of the underlying novel, argues that this scarring forces the actor into masculinity because he can no longer perform, which then restabilizes the nation's gender as masculine; yet Begonia goes on to act as a "male Mencius's mother," symbolizing an utterly devoted Mother-China. A review of Begonia by Eileen Chang (Zhang Ailing 张爱玲, 1920–95) read the play's success as a paradox for huaju

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17 Ibid., 48.
as a national theatrical form: "It astounds us to reflect that, although the new theater of China has taken a firmly antagonistic stand against Peking Opera from its very conception the first real triumph of the new theater is a compromise—a humiliating fact."\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Begonia} was also adapted in 1943 into a film, another medium with which both the old and new plays were increasingly having to compete.

In her foundational essay comparing Chinese and Western theater, Clara Cuadrado Yü argues that in the early twentieth century "the two theaters began marching toward each other. The modern West started its effort to break the shackles of the realistic tradition, the Chinese also began to feel the insufficiency of their conventional stage art."\textsuperscript{20} The West would turn to Chinese theatre for a vision of synthetic theater, China to the West for its "illusion of actuality." Yü usefully reminds us of the unique way that theater travels across cultures. The proximity of almost all the examples Yü gives—Brecht, Artaud, Meyerhold, Genet, Cocteau, among others—to formations of modernism seems likewise crucial. While highlighting some of the major trends of Chinese theater in the first decades of the twentieth century, I have tried to demonstrate how frequent cross-experimentation between \textit{huaju} and \textit{xiqu} has been broadly characteristic of modern Chinese theater, while \textit{huaju} was in its earliest formations an aesthetic revolution that should be described as modernist.

\textsuperscript{19} Quoted in Gunn, "Shanghai's 'Orphan Island',' 49.
State of the Field

The overall coverage of twentieth-century Chinese theater, particularly spoken drama, continues to be limited, and especially in book-length English-language studies, almost twenty years after Xiaomei Chen wrote that "[t]he marginality of modern Chinese drama studies strikes one as so obvious that it might not seem to need much documentation."\(^{21}\) To the best of my knowledge, one would need to go back to Chen's own 1995 *Occidentalism: A Theory of Counter-discourse in Post-Mao China* (second edition 2002) to find a sustained engagement with spoken drama traversing both the Republican and post-Mao periods, while *Acting the Right Part* covers the intervening years of the first quarter-century of the People's Republic. In its focus on Chinese theater in the first half of the twentieth century, *Translational Stages: Chinese Theatrical Modernism* is in closest conversation with three recent monographs: Siyuan Liu's *Performing Hybridity in Colonial-Modern China* (2013), Liang Luo's *The Avant-Garde and the Popular in Modern China: Tian Han and the Intersection of Performance and Politics* (2014), and Kwok-Kan Tam's *Chinese Ibsenism: Reinventions of Women, Class, and Nation* (2019). The dissertation is distinguished from these monographs in period focus, comparative perspective, emphasis on translation, and theoretical/methodological framing, while remaining distinct in terms of specific plays or playwrights chosen for extended analysis. Related scholarship on Chinese theater since 2000 includes, on the Republican era, Katherine Hui-ling Chou's *Performing China: Actresses, Performance Culture, and Visual Politics, 1910–45* (*Biaoyan Zhongguo: Nü mingxing, biaoyan wenhua, shijue zhengzhi, 1910–45* 表演中国: 女明星, 表演文化, 视觉政治, 1910–45, 2004), and more broadly Tian Benxiang's three-volume history

Earlier theater histories including those of William Dolby (1976) and Colin Mackerras (1990) continue to be touchstones for gaining a wider overview.

Siyuan Liu's *Performing Hybridity in Colonial-Modern China* covers the period of roughly 1905–15 and the *wenmingxi* or civilized drama. Liu makes a groundbreaking recovery of the prehistory of what came to be called *huaju* in this "hybrid" form drawn from Western stage drama, Chinese *xiqu*, and Japanese *shinpa*. While I open Chapter One by looking at Chen Dabei's time as an actor in *wenmingxi*, my detailed analysis of individual theatrical works starts roughly when Liu's ends and focuses on the later *aimeide* movement. My use of modes of translation as a methodological framing device also differs from Liu's theoretical approach of hybridity: rather than using a genetic metaphor, I describe the development of new forms of intercultural drama in terms of translation processes. Liu's study of *wenmingxi* traces Western influence through Japan on into China, through both the influence of anti-Qing agitators who fled to Japan in 1898, and the nearly 10,000 Chinese students who studied there in the first decade of the twentieth century; the theater Liu discusses also often featured improvised dialogue based on scenarios. Instead I look more closely at script-based performances and the translation of scripts from Western languages at the point when there was a shift toward looking to "the West" without necessarily having Japan as intermediary. In terms of broader movements of translation of fiction and non-fiction as well as drama, this parallels the contemporaneous shift away from using existing Japanese translations as intertexts as competency in European languages became more widespread.

Liang Luo's *The Avant-Garde and the Popular in Modern China* treats the career of a single theater artist, Tian Han, but that career is long and varied enough to span the early years of
huaju through the Cultural Revolution. My detailed studies in the following chapters of the lives of Chen Dabei, Lin Huiyin, and John Wong-Quincey complement Luo's account of Tian Han's career, while my methodology and focus on formations of modernism differ from Luo's narrative of a successful avant-garde. Luo argues that Tian's work epitomizes a Chinese avant-garde that was popular, successful, and in step with an antifascist international avant-garde movement, in contrast to the failed European avant-garde famously diagnosed by Peter Bürger.²² Luo pegs this international interwar avant-garde to a group of men born in 1898 whose work intersected at one point or another: Tian Han, Bertolt Brecht, Sergei Eisenstein, Tokomitsu Ruiichi, Joris Ivens, and Paul Robeson, who helped translate into English and popularize Tian Han's "avant-garde" song, "Arise, you who refuse to be bond-slaves" ("March of the Volunteers," Yiyongjun jinxingqu 义勇军进行曲). This song later became the national anthem of the People's Republic of China, redirecting the international labor movement vision toward nationalist causes.

Kwok-Kan Tam's Chinese Ibsenism: Reinventions of Women, Class, and Nation surveys the influence of Ibsen's plays in twentieth-century China and the concept of individualist selfhood that Chinese intellectuals drew from them. Tam argues for interpreting modern Chinese theater as a public sphere and offers detailed analyses both of translations of Ibsen's writings into Chinese and of productions of Ibsen's plays in China along with plays and fictional works influenced by or modelled on Ibsen. While none of the specific works or playwrights chosen for analysis in my dissertation overlap with those discussed by Tam, Chinese Ibsenism provides a relevant and more detailed study of the "Nora phenomenon," in which the protagonist of A Doll's

²² In Bürger's theory the avant-garde performs a self-critical function with regard to the "social subsystem" of art in bourgeois society; the avant-garde aims to destroy the institution of art with the intent of reintegrating art and life praxis. In this account the historical European avant-garde failed in its attempt to join art to life, epitomized by the reabsorption of its works into the very institutions that were the object of its attack.
House was taken as a model of the new woman, a prototypical feminist icon, and whose example of leaving home was followed not only by literary examples, but also, Tam argues, by the larger movement of women leaving the home and eventually of young people leaving their homes to join the Communist cause.

Translational Stages: Chinese Theatrical Modernism intersects with the trend toward treating translation as a central investment of comparative literary study, as seen, for example, in Emily Apter's The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature (2006) and Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability (2013), Ignacio Infante's After Translation: The Transfer and Circulation of Modern Poetics across the Atlantic (2013), and Longxi Zhang's From Comparison to World Literature (2015). My project does not seek the type of broad survey approach favored in Apter's work, instead remaining grounded in historical and material examination of particular translations, whether between or among languages, genres, and forms of signification. Susan Bassnett has noted that theater is "one of the most neglected areas" within translation studies, in part because "the text is only one element in the totality of theatre discourse," suggesting a lacuna I will endeavor to fill.23

Since 2000 the marginalization of the study of theater and drama within the field of modernist studies has been contested through works such as the essay collection Modern Drama: Defining the Field (2003), Julia A. Walker's Expressionism and Modernism in the American Theatre (2005), and Toril Moi's Henrik Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism (2006). The volume Not the Other Avant Garde, coedited by James Harding and John Rouse (2006) has also revisited the centrality of theater and performance to the historical avant-garde as defined by Peter Bürger in order to extend his focus on European movements—Dada and Surrealism, with the suggestion

that the theory might be applicable as well to Russian Constructivism, Italian Futurism, and German Expressionism—geographically. Modernist studies and studies of the avant-garde have been increasingly engaged with global framing of traditionally Europe-centered fields, which can of course suggest either openness or expansionism. With *Translational Stages: Chinese Theatrical Modernism* I hope to contribute to this trend, while bringing to bear the comparative literature toolkit sometimes missing from these global turns.

Earlier comparative study of twentieth-century Chinese theater often took the form of influence studies, and more recently has overlapped with the subfield of intercultural theater, as seen, for example, in Min Tian's *Twentieth-Century Chinese-Western Intercultural Theatre* (2008) and Claire Conceison's *Significant Other: Staging the American in China* (2004). Theater scholars including Christopher Balme in *Decolonizing the Stage: Theatrical Syncretism and Post-Colonial Drama* (2006) and Rustom Bharucha in *Theatre and the World: Performance and the Politics of Culture* (1990, republished 2005) have argued for differentiating intercultural theater as Western theaters incorporating non-Western elements versus non-Western theaters absorbing Western elements, as a way of distinguishing appropriations by current or former colonial or imperial cultures. I would propose that thinking in terms of intrasemiotic translation might pose an alternative description to intercultural theater. Stephen G. Yao's *Translation and the Languages of Modernism* (2002) marks a key intervention in understanding the relationship between translation and modernism, or of modernism as an "age of translations." Relevant studies of translation specifically into Chinese include Ying Hu's monograph *Tales of Translation: Composing the New Woman in China, 1899-1918* (2000), Leo Tak-hung Chan's anthology *Twentieth-Century Chinese Translation Theory: Modes, Issues and Debates* (2004), and Lydia H. Liu's *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated
Alexandra C. Y. Huang's Chinese Shakespeares (2009) is perhaps the most comparable recent publication in addressing Chinese theater of the twentieth century in comparative context. My hope is that the dissertation will contribute to scholarship in the fields of comparative literature, theatre studies, translation studies, and modernist studies.

Methodology

My methodological framework has three axes of process, genre, and period: the process is translation, the genre theater, and the period the 1910s to 1930s, which I identify as that of modernism in the Chinese theater. Translation provides a central organizing principle in several guises, including Roman Jakobson's triad of interlingual (between two languages), intralingual (rewording within one language), and intersemiotic (between sign systems, here, between text and theater), and the additional category of intrasemiotic (within a sign system, here, between or among theatrical forms). The emphasis throughout is on translation specifically for theater. Theater has been taken in general to indicate either text- or script-based performance, although I will also discuss performance events without a basis in script. Methodologically, I apply the critical terminology of translation and theater studies with concrete or non-metaphorical reference to particular texts and performances. Interlingual, intralingual, intersemiotic, and intrasemiotic translation, considered in combination, form a specific analytical framework within what might be more generally called adaptation. Translation applies especially well to describe the changes and transformations of text and theater, benefiting a focus on a transformational episode in theater history. The question is not the quality or accuracy of translation, but the historical fact of translation in a period when tectonic shifts in theatrical form coincided with a
literary culture in which there were at times more translations than original literary works being published.

**Reframing Modernism in China**

The encroachment of Western nations into treaty port cities and the ceding of Hong Kong to the British following the Opium Wars of 1839–42/56–60, as well as the loss of Taiwan to Japan after the First Sino-Japanese War in 1894–95, had profound effects on the attempt to establish China as a modern nation-state. The crushing of the Boxer Rebellion in 1900 by Western and Japanese forces and the subsequent demand for reparations from the Qing government were significant influences as well. The assignment of the German-controlled Shandong concession to Japan in the Treaty of Versailles would prove the flashpoint for the May 4th, 1919 protests, a movement that then lent its name to the New Culture movement that had begun in the mid-1910s and extended through the 1920s, and eventually came to be used as synonymous with "modern Chinese literature" in the Republican era. The presence of foreign concessions controlled by Western and Japanese powers continued until the 1940s, compounded by Japan's gaining control of Manchuria in 1931 and subsequent invasion of the coastal provinces and major cities in 1937. In *Lure of the Modern: Writing Modernism in Semicolonial China, 1917–37*, Shu-mei Shih argues for understanding the effect on China of these imperialisms culturally by adopting the political use of the term semicolonialism instead of colonialism, based on the sheer number of colonial powers, their geographic restriction to port areas, and their mutual economic competition. Politically, semicolonialism is defined as a "formation of layered domination by multiple foreign powers" that never achieved unified control or domination: "The Chinese were by no means entirely subject to the will of the colonial
rulers." In the cultural realm, the colonial powers were not perceived exclusively in terms of a resistance/collaboration axis. Instead, there was a "perceived autonomy of representation" and an openness to Western culture that Shih and others call a form of cosmopolitanism. Intellectuals addressed themselves on an abstract level, through a "leap of the imagination," to Western and Japanese metropolitan centers; this required overlooking the lived reality of semicolonized China.

As Lingchei Letty Chen discusses in a review of Lure of the Modern, this framework allows for a broad definition of "a modernism that has no modernity to interact with," namely the social institutions developed in response to widespread industrialism and capitalism in the West that had not yet taken place on a similar scale in China. Semicolonial modernism provides a cogent framework for revisiting the claims of Euro-American modernism to primacy and uniqueness. As Shih argues, "modernism never traveled one way from a point of origin to a place of destination," but rather was "consistently conceptualized as such due to the imbalance of discursive power between China and the West," a hypothetical trajectory requiring non-Western cultures to first imitate Western modernism in order to be validated. Viewed in terms of semicolonial modernism, significant but understudied literary movements in Republican China can then be revisited as examples of Chinese modernism, such as the Shanghai and Beijing schools, the Hai pai 海派 and Jing pai 京派, examined in Lure of the Modern, the latter of which I will also discuss in Chapter Two on Lin Huiyin / Phyllis Lin. On the other hand, this form of semicolonial modernism was largely a projected response to an imagined, even fantasized

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26 Shih, Lure of the Modern, 11.
cosmopolitan modernity in what was primarily a one-sided conversation: "the Chinese
gesticulating energetically without really getting seen or heard." I will take seriously here this
notion of "gesticulating" and dialogue as constituting a type of performance, even if, in this
articulation, there is a limited audience. For Chen Dabei, the subject of Chapter One, the
emphasis fell on creating gesticulation, affect, and speech that were more apparently human, in
contrast to what he experienced as the defamiliarized performances of xiqu. Lin, as seen in
Chapter Two, brought to the stage and to a consciously staged life signifiers of "the modern" as a
way of replicating and staging modernity. John Wong-Quincey, discussed in Chapter Three,
scripted performances that signaled both to an international and a domestic audience with
different messages about the nature of modern life.

In exploring how the term modernism has developed and been engaged at different
moments and places we can look to theater as a point of access into the longstanding and
ongoing debates over what constitutes "modernism" in the Chinese context. The terminological
issues around "modern" in this context are considerable. Chinese has the transliteration modeng
摩登 as well as the term used more frequently today, xiandai 现代. Xiandai is an example of a
kanji 漢字 term coined in Japanese using Chinese characters to translate a European concept of
modern, then adopted into Chinese, a phenomenon explored in Lydia H. Liu's Translingual
Practice. In addition, many things termed "new" or xin 新 in the first part of the twentieth
century (new literature, new theater, etc.) were subsequently deemed "modern." For example, in
her discussion of Zhao Jiabi's 1935 compendium that promoted a canonical image of the May
Fourth movement (and of huaju's formation), Liu translates Zhongguo xin wenxue daxi as

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27 Ibid., 374.
28 Liu, Translingual Practice, see Appendices.
Compendium of Modern Chinese Literature rather than the more literal Compendium of the New Chinese Literature. Discussing the mutually implicated terms of modernity, modern, and modernism often necessitates terminological workarounds. The first two apply to both historical periodization and social conditions; all three apply to aesthetic work (eg. literary modernity, modern literature/art, modernism); and only the third has been largely restricted in application to aesthetic style and the movement associated with that style, which may also have a periodized dimension.

In practice these valences are often used in combination. For example, when Carlos Rojas designates "high modern" as a historical period covering mid-twentieth century China, he implicitly invokes the notion of "high literary modernism" on the Western model; when David Der-wei Wang defines "literary modernity" in late Qing fiction as that which exhibits newness and innovation, it points both to definitions of modernity in a technological sense and to the "Make it New" slogan made famous by Ezra Pound. Here I have termed theatrical modernism a local, radical shift in theatrical form that takes place in response to globalizing cultural modernity.

The interactions between these terminological valences are related to the kinds of overdetermination seen in early twentieth-century Chinese visual culture and performance. In The Naked Gaze: Reflections on Chinese Modernity, Rojas uses a 1903 photograph of the Empress Dowager Cixi (1835–1908) holding a hand mirror and while placing a flower in her hair to mark a pivot from traditional to modern China, ushering in visual modernity. The mirror is taken to suggest specularity, the dominant visual mode of the late imperial nineteenth century, while the photographer's camera signals the advent of the mode of spectatorship that will predominate in the twentieth, until the contemporary period of "screened projections." Rojas's
psychoanalytic reading of the photograph argues that for Cixi, who had previously resisted portraiture, seeing the image produced a transferred mirror-stage identification of herself that transformed her perception of how she was seen on the global stage or Heideggerian *Weltbild*. The photograph is interpreted as carefully staged to recreate an image frequently seen in late imperial art and literature, the feminine space of a private boudoir intended for a male viewer.

Rojas's reading in terms of staged photography and performative gender can be supplemented by noting that the image is literally theatrical: Cixi is posing as an actor on a stage, as made immediately recognizable by her hand positioning, in striking reference to Du Liniang from the Ming dynasty *Kunqu* or "Kun opera" play *Peony Pavilion* (*Mudan ting* 牡丹亭) by Tang Xianzu 汤显祖 (1550–1616).29

In *The Distorting Mirror: Visual Modernity in China*, Laikwan Pang suggests a different framing of the changes in visual culture brought about by popular imaging devices strongly associated with Western modernity. Her examples include the kinetoscope, literally the Western mirror, with "mirror" meaning "lens" by extension (*xiyang jing* 西洋镜, a device discussed further in Chapter One): "While modernity provided and fostered a set of cultural conditions in which the Chinese saw things anew, these acts of seeing in turn defined what modernity was."30 Pang's study, in a manner similar to Shih's *Lure of the Modern*, turns the question of "modernity" in the Chinese context away from material conditions and toward a visualized (in Shih's case, imagined) modernity. Although modernism per se is not discussed in *The Distorting Mirror*,

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29 While the idea of the Dowager Empress, then seventy, playing the youthful Du Liniang may seem incongruous, the curator of these images from the Freer/Sackler Gallery draws the same connection, confirming the recognizability of this visual reference. The interior or boudoir image is also juxtaposed to a still from the film of *Peony Pavilion* starring Mei Lanfang. <https://asia.si.edu/exhibition/tableaux-the-power-of-play/>.

where the focus is ontological, the book's argument is framed in terms of a response to modernity accessed through seeing, which allows Pang to reorient the discussion of "the powerful West seeing the powerless China."\(^{31}\) Considering the "gesticulating" one-sided conversation of Chinese modernism Shih describes, along with Pang's discussion of a Chinese modernity defined through acts of seeing, and the theatrical reference of Cixi's photograph, we can see how the stage, a site of projection and of performance, could be used as a way of visualizing, absorbing, criticizing, even condemning the modern.

One staging ground for debates over the applicability of the term modernism in the Chinese context has been the May Fourth movement of the late teens and early twenties of the twentieth century, with its aggressive iconoclasm, the attempt to overthrow the old in favor of the new, and the radical shift of literary values with the adoption of *baihua* 白话 vernacular style of language lending themselves to being compared to the Western modernists' call to "Make it New" and radical experiments in literary form. As Leo Ou-fan Lee notes in *Shanghai Modern: The Flowering of a New Urban Culture in China, 1930–45*, "the very word 'new' (xin) became the crucial component of a cluster of new word compounds denoting a qualitative change in all spheres of life."\(^{32}\) David Der-wei Wang's *Fin de Siècle Splendor: Repressed Modernities of Late Qing Fiction, 1849–1911* frames its placement of Chinese literary modernity in the late Qing in explicit contrast to the discourse of the modern constructed around the May Fourth. These writers responded in innovative ways to "multilingual, cross-cultural trafficking of ideas, technologies, and powers in the wake of 19th-century Western expansionism," long before the

\(^{31}\) Ibid., 3.

May Fourth championing of what were allegorized as Mr. Science and Mr. Democracy.\textsuperscript{33} In *Woman and Chinese Modernity: The Politics of Reading Between West and East*, Rey Chow has influentially argued for recuperating the popular fiction style of "mandarin ducks and butterflies" in the study of modern Chinese literature in part because May Fourth had come to mark the be-all and end-all of modern Chinese literature: its struggles became the signs of Chinese literary modernity, its "theories and experiments" evidence for Chinese literary modernism. Chow argues as well for reconsideration of the May Fourth equation of Westernization with modernization in light of its imbrication with imperialism.

Looking back to the late Qing period, calls for social, political, and cultural reform were frequently entwined with discussions of theater. Liang Qichao treats works of fiction and drama interchangeably when discussing literature's stimulating powers in the 1902 essay "On the Relationship Between Fiction and the Government of the Masses" (*Lun xiaoshuo yu qunzhi zhi guanxi* 论小说与群治之关系; *xiaoshuo* in earlier usage covered both forms of writing), although what he describes is clearly a reading experience. Liang Qichao's affiliate Jiang Zhiyou, among others, drew a direct line between the symbolic presentation of battle in *xiqu* and the failure of the Boxer Uprising in 1900: "simply emulating theatrical conventions in real battles [...] resulted in a complete trouncing and the loss of a million lives in 1900. That clearly demonstrated the consequence of not portraying wars in modern form."\textsuperscript{34} Chen Duxiu 陈独秀 (1879–1942), one of the founders of the Chinese Communist Party and editor of *New Youth*, who advocated first for *xiqu* reform and later for its replacement by *huaju*, put matters bluntly in


\textsuperscript{34} Quoted in Siyuan Liu, 2013, 68.
1904: "Only the reformed theatre can change the whole society—the deaf can see it, and the blind can hear it."

In the pro-Westernization discourse of the New Culture Movement, calls for reform of culture via reform of theater were also prominent, most notably Hu Shi's essay "Ibsenism." Gilbert C. F. Fong points out that Hu addresses Ibsen "not as an artist, but as a social thinker arguing his point with visual images on the stage." Although "Ibsenism" discusses several of Ibsen's plays, on the whole the essay uses Ibsen to voice Hu Shi's reform agenda, landing at the end on the formulation "everybody feels that there must be a reform. This is Ibsenism." In addition to the discussion of law, religion, and morality and the necessity of individualism and revolution, Hu puts forward his influential case for "realism" (xieshi zhuyi 写实主义) as modelled by Ibsen: "Ibsen’s greatest asset is that he is willing to put forward the truth and that he can describe all old and depraved truths and expose them so that everybody may see them in detail." The dominant cultural discourse around "realism" was both projected forward by the May Fourth intellectuals and backward by the Maoist paradigm of socialist or revolutionary realism in the arts, largely overwriting or forestalling discussion of "modernism" in the pre-1949 period. Xiaobing Tang in Chinese Modern: The Heroic and the Quotidian has argued for the reevaluation of literary works as "modernist" rather than "realist, especially in the case of the story often hailed as the first piece of modern Chinese literature, "Diary of a Madman".

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38 Ibid.
(Kuangren riji 狂人日记, 1918) by Lu Xun 鲁迅 (1881–1936). The application of the modernist label is a consciously political critical intervention, a way of counteracting "hegemonic imposition" of "codified realism" on the modern Chinese literary canon for most of the twentieth century.\(^{39}\) Another avenue for thinking about modernism in the context of the New Culture Movement is comparative examination of interactions and interreference between these writers and modernists in other cultures. For example, Hu Shi's 1917 "Modest Proposals for the Reform of Literature" (Wenxue gailiang chuyi 文学改良刍议), written in classical style the year before "Ibsenism", when Hu was studying at Cornell University, is a response to Ezra Pound's 1913 "A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste," suggesting how conversant Hu Shi was with what were then not yet widely circulated trends in Anglo-modernism.

Shanghai in the 1930s and 1940s presents a period of intensive interest for the study of Chinese modernism in the form most recognizable to American and European models of high modernist criticism that emphasize stylistic terms such as stream-of-consciousness, interior monologue, and fragmentation. Leo Ou-fan Lee's *Shanghai Modern* focuses first on the mapping of Shanghai as a modern metropolis with a vibrant consumer culture, although, in contrast to Shih's study, his discussion of Shanghai as semicolonial is largely relegated to a section in the final chapter, where he concludes that for the modernist writers he studies, "their sense of Chinese identity was never in question in spite of the Western colonial presence in Shanghai."\(^{40}\) Lee explores at length how modernity could also be imagined in the pages of periodicals, particularly advertisements, and Western literary modernism by means of the many literary journals available in Shanghai's bookstores, from the *New Yorker* and *Harper's* to *The Dial* and

\(^{40}\) Lee, *Shanghai Modern*, 312.
The New Criterion. Chinese-language literary journals such as Les Contemporains (Xiandai zazhi 现代杂志) edited by Shi Zhecun 施蛰存 (1905–2003) featured many translations as well as original literature. Both Lee and Shih emphasize that these modernist figures wrote overwhelmingly in Chinese, rather than the languages of the colonizers, as further evidence of the limited influence of colonialization. The modernism of this period might be described as highly self-aware, in parallel to the Anglo-modernism of the 1930s and 1940s, when its writers became more conscious of modernism as a movement.

The establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 and the Nationalist government's retreat to Taiwan led to two distinct literary cultures, both heavily politicized. Xiaojue Wang details in Modernity with a Cold War Face: Reimagining the Nation in Chinese Literature Across the 1949 Divide how in the field of literary study the mid-century mark became a dividing line between the modern or xiandai, followed by "an epoch of literary aberration brought about by political authoritarianism on both sides of the Taiwan Strait," and the contemporary or dangdai 当代. The image of what Wang calls the "Cold War face" is a frozen, Janus-faced mask dividing modernity into either liberating or destructive forces. Behind the mask are the realms of "gender, race, ethnicity, colonialism, diaspora, and diverse cultural practices" that become invisible when the only terms of discussion are communism and anti-communism. Wang argues for suturing these bifurcations by constructing critical narratives of Chinese modernity that extend from pre-1949 to the post-Cold War configurations of the People's Republic of China and the Republic of China. This is accomplished by focusing on writers whose artistic development cannot be neatly explained by the 1949 division, thereby

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41 Xiaojue Wang, Modernity with a Cold War Face: Reimagining the Nation in Chinese Literature Across the 1949 Divide (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2013), 9.
42 Ibid. 22.
avoiding the "sentimental" categories of the dissident, the victim, and the accomplice. This analytical frame necessarily focuses on writers who were fairly well-established literary figures pre-1949, and who also survived the next three decades through the Anti-Rightist campaign, the attack on the "four olds" in the Cultural Revolution, and the White Terror in Taiwan. The playwright Cao Yu might be a candidate for such a study, as a prominent writer whose career is often divided into pre- and post-1949 stages. After being highly prolific in the 1930s and 40s, he wrote only three plays in the remaining fifty years of his life, yet he continued in an influential role as the head of the Beijing People's Art Theater until 1996.

In the 1950s, a massive reorganization of the educational system took place in the People's Republic of China, with a new literary curriculum devised to replace what had been called "new literature" (associated with the May Fourth movement) with the term "modern literature" (xiandai wenxue 现代文学). The change in name corresponded to an overwriting of the themes of individualism and egalitarianism as "bourgeois and reactionary." Writers associated with Westernization or modernism were labelled decadent and "marginalized in all literary histories." In keeping with Mao Zedong's 1942 "Talks at the Yan’an Forum on Literature and Art," socialist realism became the predominant mode of fiction, eventually reconstituted as "revolutionary realism" after the split with the Soviet Union in 1960. Theatrical performance in the first quarter-century of the People's Republic of China underwent a process of reform and eventual winnowing into a narrow repertoire of model works. The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution would be launched with violent criticism of three "poisonous weeds," all of them dramatic works in xiqu form: Wu Han's Hai Rui Dismissed from Office (Hai Rui baguan 海

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43 Ibid., 29.
44 Shih, Lure of the Modern, viii.
瑞罢官), Tian Han's Xie Yaohuan 谢瑶环, and Meng Chao's Li Huiniang 李慧娘, the former two Jingju or "Peking opera" and the latter in Kunqu or "Kun opera" form. Wu Han's play, written by a prominent historian and extolling the Ming official Hai Rui for his honesty, devotion to the people, and willingness to criticize the emperor, was taken as a veiled reference to the military commander Peng Dehuai's (1898–1975) criticism of Mao's Great Leap Forward campaign of 1958. The focus on these plays suggests how theater was perceived to be a threatening site for the staging of criticism, or at least a very high profile site at which to crush that criticism. These were the darker sides of theater's potential for broad social influence, whereas it could also be utilized for propaganda as exemplified in the bright model plays (yangban xi 样板戏) of the following decade.

Meanwhile the Kuomintang in Taiwan implemented a near-total ban on Chinese literature written between 1919 and 1949 on the theory that it had been "an ideological incubator for the rise of communism," thus leaving only a "lyrical, sentimental, nonsubversive" version of the new literature.\(^45\) The KMT also officially banned the Japanese language, requiring a generation of local writers to either cease publication or learn Chinese, which had previously been banned under the Japanese kominka policy. The February 28 Incident of 1947, the violent suppression of an uprising of native Taiwanese against the KMT followed by mass imprisonments and executions, left a lasting mark on Taiwan’s society, although it could not be written about openly in the ensuing period of martial law. In Literary Culture in Taiwan Sung-sheng Yvonne Chang structures the literary development of Taiwan after 1949 until the lifting of martial law in 1987 into four categories. The first is a dominant mainstream of writers who

acceded to the Nationalist government's cultural policies, leading to a culture characterized as "conservative, conformist, and neotraditionalist." An alternative to the mainstream found voice in the modernist movement of the 1950s and 60s, followed by two oppositional movements, the nativist, which was heavily critical of the modernist movement and its pro-Western views, and the localist, a movement focused on Taiwan's local cultural heritage. Taiwanese modernism was a self-styled movement centered on the Foreign Languages and Literature Department of National Taiwan University and the professor T. A. Hsia, whose students founded the magazine *Modern Literature (Xiandai wenxue 现代文学)* in 1960. As Chang notes, the group felt that Taiwanese literature was lagging behind the West and should undergo "modernization." This literary modernization emphasized form and language over content, making a claim to aesthetic autonomy that was itself a form of resistance in relation to the dominant literary culture with its promotion of anti-communist messages.

In the preface to *Shanghai Modern*, Leo Ou-fan Lee, one of T. A. Hsia's students, recounts the heady experience of discovering Western high modernism and reconstructing it in mid-century Taiwan:

> How could this brand of "modernism" have been produced in the corridors of an old university building in Taipei by a small group of college sophomores and juniors who could barely read English or any other Western language? [...] We had made what we considered to be a major "discovery" at a time when High Modernism had already passed its creative prime and entered the American classroom as classics. Did Chinese writers of an earlier generation know about these modern masters when they were still alive—that is, in the period between the two World Wars? 

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47 Sung-sheng Yvonne Chang in her earlier study, *Modernism and the Nativist Resistance: Contemporary Chinese Fiction from Taiwan*, labels the modernist movement alternative, the nativist oppositional, and the localist counterhegemonic.
Lee's choice of the word "brand" here gestures toward the explicit labelling at work in the formation of this Taiwanese modernism, fully conscious of its belatedness. In one regard this represented a situation quite different from China in the first half of the century: here, the students had suddenly realized that their modernized society lacked a corresponding modernism. Lee's interest in learning whether there was an originating source of Chinese modernism was further spurred when C. T. Hsia pointed out to him that the students had unknowingly chosen almost the same title as Shi Zhecun's magazine *Les Contemporains* (*Xiandai zazhi*, 1932–35). Lee's academic study *Shanghai Modernism* is itself an example of how modernism has continued to be reapplied to different contexts: a modernist from Taipei in the 1950s and 1960s rediscovering the modernism of Shanghai in the 1930s and 40s.

The play *Red Nose* (*Hong bizi* 红鼻子) written in the 1960s by Yao Yi-wei 姚一苇 (1922–1997), editor of *Modern Literature* from 1962–7, became the first play from Taiwan since 1949 to be performed in the People's Republic of China when it was staged in 1982 at the China Youth Art Theatre of Beijing. Its apparently apolitical "modernist" aesthetics may have made the play a natural selection for production in the early post-Mao period, even though *Red Nose* had been written in response to the political imprisonment of novelist Chen Ying-chen 陈映真 in 1968. The play is set in a seaside resort where access has been cut off by an avalanche. A travelling vaudeville troupe sets up camp in the hotel, and the clown—the stage directions indicate that he wears a mask with a red nose attached—sets about drawing out from the guests what they most fear. Then the clown pulls off seeming miracles: a businessman who believes his son died in a plane crash receives good news; a musician finds inspiration; a young girl who has been unresponsive for years begins to speak. The vaudeville troupe is hired to perform in celebration, but at the climax of the show the clown's wife arrives and unmask...
into a meek, ordinary man no one recognizes out of costume. The next morning a dancer from the troupe goes swimming and is feared lost. The clown puts his mask back on and swims after her. She returns and he, apparently unable to swim in any case, does not. Within the play the clown compares himself to Jesus, Shakyamuni, and Wu Feng, an official during the reign of Qianlong who according to legend convinced an indigenous tribe to abandon their headhunting practice by sacrificing himself. The mention of Wu Feng is the only reference that would overtly tie *Red Nose* to Taiwan, with the remaining elements of the play, its characters, and the setting in the isolated hotel consigned to an abstract world, a literally and figuratively sealed-off aesthetic sphere.

Taiwan's modernism movement of the 1950s and 1960s demonstrates a conscious construction of a specific aesthetic style by a fairly localized group of writers. The reboot of modernism of the People's Republic of China in the 1980s took a very different direction under the *gaige kaifang* 改革开放 or "[economic] reform and opening [to the world]" policies of Deng Xiaoping. Jing Wang and Zhang Xudong detail the intensive cultural debates of this period, especially the so-called "culture fever" (*wenhua re* 文化热) of the last half of the 1980s. The cultural debates were both instigated top-down in official discourse and pushed forward by artistic innovations, although the decade was also characterized by periods when the Party stifled experimentation, including the 1983 Anti-Spiritual Pollution Campaign, the 1986 Anti-Bourgeois Liberalization Campaign, and finally the crackdown on the Tiananmen Square demonstrations of June 1989. Establishing the form of alternative modernity to be applied to China's situation was a way of locating the nation, after years of isolation, in the broader global context. Max Weber's theory of the differentiation of value spheres was one influential model in this respect, interpreted in intellectual discourse to mean that China could not be fully
modernized until the aesthetic had been separated from the social. This led to a "relentless, feverish pursuit" of modernism as an "aesthetic springboard," because the presence of modernism would retrospectively confirm China's modernity.\textsuperscript{49} There was also considerable debate over whether artistic production that looked like "modernism" was not instead "pseudo-modernism," and then, under the logic of racing through a compressed version of Western cultural development, whether what looked "postmodern" was "pseudo-postmodernism."\textsuperscript{50} In the early post-Mao years major trends of Western literature and literary theory since the 1950s were suddenly made available almost simultaneously through translation, so the issue was further complicated by the tendency to categorize any foreign "-ism" that was not socialist realism as "modernism."\textsuperscript{51}

Gao Xingjian's 高行健 (b. 1940) study \textit{A Preliminary Inquiry into the Techniques of Modern Fiction} (\textit{Xiandai xiaoshuo jiqiao chutan} 现代小说技巧初探, 1981) proved particularly influential in these modernism debates, and was a contributing factor in his being assigned to the People's Art Theater in Beijing as a playwright. Gao's play \textit{Bus Stop} (\textit{Chezhan} 车站, 1983), which depicts a group of people waiting for a bus that never stops for them, had clear affinities to modernism that were noted in early reviews. A staged version of Lu Xun's \textit{Passerby} (\textit{Guoke} 过客, 1925), originally written as a prose-poem, was shown before the performances of \textit{Bus Stop} as a way of legitimizing the play by associating it with this canonical figure in modern Chinese literature. Gao's experiment in modernism was a few years too early for the Culture Fever, and


the play was roundly denounced, the Party propaganda department calling it "more Hai Rui Dismissed from Office than Hai Rui Dismissed from Office." In the genre of fiction post-Cultural Revolution, successive movements of scar (shanghen 伤痕) and root-seeking (xungen 寻根) writing were followed by the emergence of an "avant-garde" trend in fiction, which included Yu Hua 余华 (b. 1960), Ge Fei 格非 (b. 1964), Su Tong 苏童 (b. 1963), and Can Xue 残雪 (b. 1953). This avant-garde was taken as emblematic of Chinese literature's coming of age in comparison to the aesthetic development of modernism in the West. The 1987 avant-garde issue of the literary magazine *Harvest* (Shouhuo 收获) that launched the careers of these authors also published the experimental play *Owl in the House* (Wuli de Maotouying 屋里的猫头鹰), although the playwright Zhang Xian 张献 (b. 1955) has received nothing like the critical attention the short story writers did. More broadly, the 1980s are often seen as a continuation of a modernizing project from the Republican area, or as a wholesale restarting of that project. Xudong Zhang even describes the 1980s as the third coming of modernism after two failed attempts, the first being the May Fourth movement and the second the modernism of the 1930s and 40s.

In addressing modernism in Chinese theater, I place its emergence as coincident with the early development of *huaju* in the late 1910s and extending to the 1930s. In doing so I have found Julia A. Walker's definition of modernism particularly helpful: modernism "is not simply an aesthetic movement marked by stylistic innovation (as explained by traditional formalist criticism), but it must also be understood as a cultural response to the changed conditions of 

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modernity. Appearing within an aesthetic register, it functions as a culture's attempt to represent itself to itself." At the same time, the debate between the ideas of a single global modernity, argued by Fredric Jameson, and of alternative or multiple modernities, proposed by Dilip Gaonkar, is ongoing, complicating the question of what constitutes the conditions of modernity in addition to what conditions the response. The point of access to modernism provided by Chinese theater seems to me quite clear: to reapply an overused quotation, "on or about December 1910 human character changed." At about the same time, it could rather be said that the representation of human character onstage changed, resulting in the form of huaju as an aesthetic response to changed conditions. Translational Stages places "new theater" and related movements within Chinese theater in comparative relation to modernism.

Chapter Summaries

In selecting particular playwrights and works from the course of early twentieth-century Chinese theater for close analysis, I have consciously focused on figures outside the canon of huaju, which means that my chapter-to-chapter analysis is in part exploratory and yields fresh discoveries from among obscure or hard-to-find works and materials. The following chapters offer substantial analyses of the lives and work of three influential yet critically underserved

54 "All human relations have shifted—those between masters and servants, husbands and wives, parents and children. And when human relations change there is at the same time a change in religion, conduct, politics, and literature. Let us agree to place one of these changes about the year 1910," Virginia Woolf, "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" (1924), Modernism: An Anthology of Sources and Documents, ed. Vassiliki Kolocotroni, Jane Goldman, Olga Taxidou (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998, reprint 2013), 396.
figures including Chen Dabei (1887–1944), Lin Huiyin (Phyllis Whei-yin Lin, 1904–55), and John Wong-Quincey (Wang Wenxian, 1886–1968). Each chapter also treats a mode or modes of translation characteristic of the practice of the central theater artist, all within the larger framework of the emergence of *huaju* as an intrasemiotic translation of the Western realist stage.

Chapter One examines how in the early 1920s actor, playwright, and translator Chen Dabei contributed to Chinese theater interlingual translations of not only scripts, but also numerous manuals and guides related to amateur, little, or independent theater movements in the United States, Britain, and France. Chen provides a fascinating case study because his highly creative translation practice was part and parcel of his original writing and theoretical contributions. The *aimeide* theater that Chen founded then sought to translate these manuals and guides intersemiotically into staged productions, defining itself against theater as a professional pursuit by its practitioners' focus on theatrical art involving study and experimentation in the dual, complementary, and, ideally, balanced fields of literary scripts and staged performances. This combined interlingual-intersemiotic translation of contemporaneous and slightly earlier Western theater movements burgeoned into a major *aimeide* movement that has been overwritten in *huaju* histories as being little more than "amateur" productions. Perhaps no spoken drama playwright probed the relationship of speech to drama as extensively and revealingly as Chen Dabei, as I demonstrate using the 1920 anti-romance *The Hero and the Beauty*—one of the earliest, and almost completely forgotten full-length tragedies in *huaju*—along with its radical rewriting as *Fourth Zhang's Wife* a decade later.

Chapter Two explores the nested stagings of Lin Huiyin's career: as an intercultural performer in Beijing, as a translational figure between modern China and modern America during her studies in Philadelphia and New Haven in the 1920s, and as a bridge between the
fledging academic discipline of theater in the United States and the establishment of huaju in 1930s China. The chapter opens by looking at Lin's performance of Rabindranath Tagore's Chitra in 1924, followed by her time studying at the Yale School of Drama, her famous salon in Beijing, her essays on theater, and a sole unfinished play, Meizhen and Them (1937). In each of these settings Lin took part in what will be described as small performances of "the modern," through intersemiotic modelling and localizing of signifiers of cultural modernity; in her scenic design and playwriting, this intersemiotic modelling contributed to the intrasemiotic translation of Western conventions of theater into huaju as a theatrical form. In her theater essays Lin argues that forms of theater, especially huaju, focus on selection and arrangement of elements for what they signify, rather than borrowing of necessity. When her important roles performed through "bicultural contact and activity" are foregrounded, the larger backdrop of Lin's project in the 1920s and 1930s becomes visible: the insistence that cultural modernization could be accomplished through staging modernity in an almost literal sense by placing signifiers of "the modern" onstage, with Lin's personal self-stagings being also part of this particular form of Chinese modernism.

Chapter Three addresses what I term the translational theater of John Wong-Quincey, theater that took aim at two audiences in two languages: Wong-Quincey wrote plays in English that first amused and then turned the tables on audiences both in the United States and, in Li Jianwu's translations, in China. I recover the double reception of the 1929 play She Stoops to Compromise, a comic send-up of the scandals and intrigues of college administration, including the way it prompted audiences in America to reflect on its enjoyment of white performers masquerading as authentic Chinese types, and how for Chinese audiences it satirized May Fourth ideals about education. I then consider Wong-Quincey's own model of "translational stages" in
modern Chinese theater, comprising a movement from translation to adaptation to creation. Although Wong-Quincey was pessimistic about the achievement of these stages in contemporary China, we can see that the range he describes of translation, adaptation, and creation in many ways maps first the more literal interlingual-intersemiotic translation of scripts and manuals of the "amateur theater," discussed with Chen Dabei and his contemporaries; the freer adaptation of the intrasemiotic modelling and localization of "the modern" seen with Lin Huiyin; and also Wong-Quincey's own creation of translational theatrical works. Chapter Three concludes by relating the quality of detachment created by Wong-Quincey's plays to modernist self-reflexivity.

In the Epilogue, I turn to Wong-Quincey's student Cao Yu's formulation of "distance for appreciation"—and its translation—at a central juncture when huaju began to move beyond its intrasemiotically translated roots toward becoming a naturalized and nationalized form of theater. For Cao Yu, distance for appreciation attempts to move audiences from a place of empathy to one of reflection. Comparing Cao Yu's concept to Brecht's contemporaneous formulation of the Verfremdungseffekt, the alienation or distancing effect, provides an example of how Cao's essay, like the theatrical works examined throughout the dissertation, unsettles narratives about the timing and directionality of modernism while revealing deep connections across theatrical cultures. This brings to a close to the narrative establishing Chen Dabei's interlingual-intersemiotic translations, Lin Huiyin's intersemiotic modelling, and John Wong-Quincey's translational metatheater as important, previously overlooked episodes in the development of early huaju as a modernist theatrical formation.
Chapter One: Chen Dabei’s Translation of Amateur Theater

Amateur actors in the West can use professional actors as models. What about us? It goes without saying that once we enter a theater we see a stage filled with figures that are not human in form and movements that are not human.

—Chen Dabei, 1921

Introduction: Amateur / Aimeide

The term aimeide 爱美的 both is and is not an interlingual translation of the word "amateur," which ambiguity, on closer examination, reflects the relationship between Chinese theater of the early 1920s in relation to American and European theater, as well as the relationship between translation and theatrical modernism. The word was coined by the theater artist Chen Dabei 陈大悲 (Chen Tingyi 陈听弈, 1887–1944), whose work as a playwright, translator, actor, and theorist will be the central focus of this chapter. Ai-mei-de approximates the three syllables of "a-ma-teur" phonetically while retaining the bifurcated root shared in French and English between the senses of one who has a passion for something and one who pursues that passion without making it a profession. Aimeide also gestures further back to the Latin root of amator or "one who loves." However, as Chen realized, the term in Chinese becomes more explicit than "amateur" in defining that pursuit or passion, with ai or "love" taking as its object mei or "beauty" such that aimeide accrues the additional sense of the aesthete or lover of art. In
keeping with a period when Chinese language underwent rapid changes, both semantically and syntactically, aimeide sits uneasily in context, wavering around the grammatical pivot of de, a separable particle used to signal that what comes before it modifies the noun that follows. Aimeide's antonym, "professional," for example, is formed with a modifying noun, zhiye 职业, connected by the particle de to the modified noun in phrases such as "professional theater" or zhiye de xiju 职业的戏剧. Yet in the case of aimeide, the particle de becomes an inseparable element of the phonetic transcription of "amateur," a usage that would often signal the formation of a noun from a modifier, much in the way that "amateur" can be either a noun or an adjective in English. When aimeide first appeared in print within the title of a series of articles, Chen Dabei's Amateur Theater (Aimeide xiju 爱美的戏剧, 1921), the author added both a parenthetical English translation—inserting "AMATEUR" between aimeide and xiju—and a parenthetical definition—"i.e., not professional theater" (ji fei zhiye de xiju 即非职业的戏剧)—signaling how the term translated a word with preexisting valences while resituating and supplementing those senses.55 [Figure 1.1]

What does aimeide signify, beyond being one example among the hundreds of words that entered the Chinese lexicon through the late years of the Qing dynasty and the early decades of the Republic of China? The second element of "amateur theater" comes into play on the contested ground of xiju, a word whose constituent characters xi and ju signal "play" raised to the level of art in performance. Chen Dabei introduced the term aimeide in 1921 to describe a new impetus in the performance genre that had already for some two decades been known as "new

55 Abbreviation of aimeide xiju as aimei ju in later texts lessens the initial strangeness of the neologism. In Chen Dabei's writings and those of his immediate circle, aimeide always appeared in its full form, whether placed before xiju or another word, including a recurring newspaper feature titled Aimeide xiaoxi or "Amateur News."
Figure 1.1

Title and byline of Chen Dabei's *Aimeide xiju* as it appeared, with slight variations, from April 20 through December 30, 1921 in the Beijing *Morning Post*. The text runs top to bottom, right to left:

*Aimeide (AMATEUR) Theater*

(i.e., not professional theater)

Chen Dabei
theater," a primarily dialogue-based theater in contrast to what then had to be called reflexively "old theater," the synthesis of singing, recitative, dance, and acrobatics that had been synonymous with theater, without qualification, prior to the twentieth century and remained the horizon of expectation for Chinese audiences well into it.\textsuperscript{56} Even in the early years of the New Culture Movement (1915–20s) when newness was the rallying cry meant to propel China toward modern nationhood through science and democracy, it was not enough, Chen's neologism suggests, to copy the example of Shanghai's theater entrepreneurs who followed the successful opening of the New Stage (Xin wutai 新舞台, est. 1908) with that of the New New Stage (Xin xin wutai 新新舞台, est. 1912). Instead, Chen promoted an aimeide theater that defined itself against theater as a professional pursuit by its practitioners' focus on theatrical art (xiju yishu 戏剧艺术) involving study and experimentation in the dual, complementary, and, ideally, balanced fields of literary scripts and staged performances. Had Chen Dabei's call for an aimeide theater remained just that, as was the case with many of the demands made by intellectuals for reform and revolution of Chinese theater in the first two decades of the twentieth century, this story might have ended after a lively debate in the journals and a few limited attempts at performance met with indifference by audiences who simply preferred the "old theater." However, not only did the aimeide theater constitute a significant and understudied movement, its thriving in the early 1920s exemplifies the vital place of theater within the course of twentieth-century Chinese literature and the broader cultural movements of the day.

Amateur productions of Western plays by students, especially those who attended

\textsuperscript{56} The writers discussed referred to "new theater" as both xinju 新剧 and xinxi 新戏 and to "old theater" as both jiuju 旧剧 and jiuxi 旧戏 with no apparent distinction. However, the terms xinju and jiuxi appear with more frequency, suggesting the beginning of a split aligning the new theater with dramatic literature and derogating the old theater as illiterate performance.
Westernized schools and lived in major urban centers, those with foreign-controlled concessions in particular, form a major early influence on the development of Chinese spoken drama or huaju 话剧. Much in the same way that the translation of "amateur" into aimeide extends well beyond the semantics of its source, however, the amateur theater of the early 1920s became something much more than later accounts of it suggest, as this chapter will illustrate. I begin by outlining Chen Dabei's early career, which has been largely displaced from the limelight of huaju history, to reveal how he was uniquely positioned to promote the aimeide movement. The remainder of the chapter focuses on the period 1920-23, crucial years for amateur theater and a time of intensive activity for Chen, between his positions as a leading writer for Beijing's daily Morning Post (Chenbao 晨报), editor of the journal Drama (Xiju 戏剧), founding member of three theater societies, director of studies and lead instructor for a school of acting, advisor for countless amateur productions, and actor in more than a few, in addition to penning six full-length plays, numerous one-acts, and translating nearly as many.57 Chen provides a fascinating case study because his highly creative translation practice was part and parcel of his original writing and theoretical contributions, as epitomized in what I will argue was the combined interlingual-intersemiotic translation of contemporaneous and slightly earlier theater movements in the United States, Britain, and France. The discussion will turn to Chen's role in the pages of the Beijing Morning Post, then to his work for the stage, tracing the production history of the widely successful play The Hero and the Beauty (Yingxiong yu meiren 英雄与美人, 1920) from its first

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57 The fullest bibliography of Chen Dabei's writing can be found in the biography by Li Minniu 李民牛 and Chen Butao 陈步涛, Hua yong wei die: Zhongguo xiandai xiju xianqu Chen Dabei zhuo 化蛹为蝶: 中国现代戏剧先驱陈大悲传 [From Pupa to Butterfly: A Biography of Chen Dabei, Pioneer of Modern Chinese Theater] (Guangzhou: Huacheng Press, 2013), 167-85, which can be usefully compared against the earlier bibliography in Han Rixin 韩日新, ed., Chen Dabei yanjiu ziliao 陈大悲研究资料 [Research Materials on Chen Dabei] (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju 中国戏剧, 1985), 181-213.
publication through its numerous performances, extensive revisions, and eventual republication as *Fourth Zhang's Wife* (*Zhang Si taitai* 张四太太, 1931), with comparison to productions of British and American plays adapted in translation.

**Before Aimeide: Chen Dabei's Profession**

In 1907, shortly before Chen Dabei’s graduation from high school, a friend took him to the Lyceum Theater in the French concession of Shanghai to see the new theater production of *Account of the Black Slaves' Cry to Heaven* (*Hei nu yutian lu* 黑奴吁天录), an adaptation of Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1851–2) by the Spring Sun Society (*Chunyang she* 春阳社). The Spring Sun production was inspired by a different adaptation of the novel staged in Japan by the Spring Willow Society (*Chunliu she* 春柳社), whose performances of this play and an adaptation of *Lady of the Camellias* (*La Dame aux Camellias*, 1848) by Alexandre Dumas, *fils*, have conventionally been considered the first Chinese spoken dramas.58 While enrolled at university in Suzhou, Chen formed a new theater society and started a correspondence with Ren Tianzhi 任天知, a leading figure connecting the Spring Willow and Spring Sun societies. Several years later Chen's student troupe would stage its own version of *Lady of the Camellias* with Chen in the leading role of Marguerite, a performance attended by

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58 These adaptations of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Lady of the Camellias* all drew from the translations by Lin Shu 林纾 (1852–1924), who radically altered his sources during the process of *duiyi* 对译 or collaborative face-to-face translation, in which one party interpreted the foreign language text orally and the other party rewrote it. On Lin Shu, see Michael Gibbs Hill, *Lin Shu, Inc.: Translation and the Making of Modern Chinese Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013) and Ying Hu, *Tales of Translation: Composing the New Woman in China, 1899–1918* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), Chapter Two.
Chen's father, who afterward insisted that his son abandon acting. Chen broke ties with his family and left school to join Ren Tianzhi's recently formed Evolution Troupe (*Jinhua tuan* 进化团), embarking in 1911 on his professional acting career.

The Evolution Troupe performed in the style introduced by the Spring Willow and Spring Sun societies that came to be called *wenmingxi* 文明戏 or "civilized drama." *Wenmingxi* was dialogue-centric and characterized by scenario-based improvisation, which in the early days often included impromptu political speeches. As detailed by Siyuan Liu, the conventional narrative of the origins of Chinese spoken drama constructed mid-century overtly rejected this form of theater because of its mixture of old and new, local and foreign, incorporating as it did elements of classical Chinese theatre, contemporary Western theater, and Japanese "new theater" (*shinpa* 新派), itself a combination of Western-style theater and *kabuki* 歌舞伎. Instead, histories of Chinese theater have drawn a sharp line between traditional theater, *xiqu* 戏曲, and modern drama or *huaju* in the form of "socially conscious, speech-centric, and commercially untainted realistic plays."\(^{59}\) As Liu traces, new theater or *wenmingxi* troupes played a significant role in the 1911 Xinhai Revolution that led to the end of the Qing dynasty, then the form achieved "a spectacular commercial boom through domestic melodrama" in the middle years of the 1910s.\(^{60}\) It bears recalling that the name *wenmingxi* attached itself to this performance style only in the late 1910s at a point when its popularity was on the wane, and that the appellation was ironic. *Wenming* belongs to a category of words that typify what Lydia Liu calls

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\(^{60}\) Ibid., 58.
"translingual practice." Originally meaning "bright, resplendent" or "excellence (in literature or art)" in classical Chinese, the written word *wenming* was borrowed into Japanese with the pronunciation *bunmei* to translate the concept of "civilization" in the European sense. Later *wenming* was brought back from Japanese into Chinese, where it could now mean both "civilized" and, by extension, "modern." To call the "new theater" of these troupes "*wenming* theater" signaled not only their modern novelty but also their incomprehensibility to their audiences: they presented often unfamiliar ideas couched in vocabulary that was invented through translingual practice. The *wenmingxi* productions were typified by expansive speeches replete with words like *wenming* that no longer meant what they had before, whose familiar meanings had been translated over and now subtended the new, borrowed ones.

Chen Dabei's decision to leave school to become a full-time actor in the new theater should be seen as a demonstration of both political and artistic commitments. Ren Tianzhi's anti-Qing agitation was well known, while the Evolution Troupe would soon be called the propaganda arm of the Xinhai Revolution. Chen toured with the troupe for most of 1911 through Nanjing, Wuhu, and Wuhan in plays with nationalist themes including a *New Lady of the Camellias* (*Xin chahua nü* 新茶花女), which adapted the story by Dumas, *fils*, to the period of the Russian-Japanese War of 1904–5. From the time of the Wuchang Uprising in October 1911 through the abdication of the last Qing emperor in February 1912, the troupe staged agit-prop works depicting revolutionary battles or telling heroic tales about revolutionaries. The troupe next took up residency at Shanghai's New New Stage for a failed collaboration in programs that alternated between the troupe and *Jingju* 京剧 or "Peking opera" troupes, with the popularity of

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the new theater during the revolution failing to translate into viable competition with the old theater.

During this period, Chen Dabei worked his way up to the place of second and then leading actor of women characters. Single-sex acting companies and an overall predominance of male actors were well-established conventions that had been dictated by law at various points in the late Qing dynasty, although, as we will see, the practice of actors portraying the opposite gender would be increasingly contested in the early decades of Republican China across both the "old" and "new" theaters.\(^{62}\) Troupes such as Ren Tianzhi's continued to use elements of the role types of the traditional Chinese stage, which are divided into four major categories—*sheng* 生 (male), *mo* 末 (male), *dan* 旦 (female), *jing* 淨 (villains), and *chou* 丑 (clowns, also villains)—with further distinctions based on the age and other attributes of the character portrayed, and actors specializing in a specific role type from the start of their training. Chen Dabei performed in *dan* roles, although this *dan* performance would likely have drawn as much from the style actors used to portray women characters in Japanese *shinpa* and the conventions of European and American stage melodrama as from *xiqu*.\(^{63}\) As a sign of Chen's popularity, the Evolution Troupe would advertise him under the banner "The World's Foremost Tragic Dan" (*Tianxia di yi beidan* 天下第一悲旦).\(^{64}\) The phrase was promotional hyperbole, given the relatively limited audiences for the new theater when at roughly the same time Shanghai newspapers were plastered with


\(^{64}\) Li and Chen, *Biography of Chen Dabei*, 38.
similarly phrased advertisements for a visit by the *Jingju* star Mei Lanfang 梅兰芳 (1894–1961). Nonetheless, the title shows Chen's rapid rise within the world of *wenmingxi* in competition with actors such as Ouyang Yuqian 欧阳予倩 (1889–1962), a *dan* performer already well-known for his work with the Spring Willow Society and later memorialized as one of the three founders of spoken drama. Chen's title of Foremost Tragic *Dan* suggests in addition how he brought together the role type of *dan* with the form of tragedy, which was strongly associated with the Western stage.

In the years 1913–17, Chen Dabei would travel extensively through the provinces along the Yangzi River basin forming new theater troupes of his own. Illustrated magazines of the 1910s preserve images of Chen in costumes styled on Western women's fashions under headings such as "Famous *Dan* of the New Theater," in publications addressed to readerships for entertainment and the arts. Frustrated with productions based on scenarios and improvisation, Chen Dabei wrote at least two scripts in this period, *The Reform of the Prodigal Son* (*Langzi huitou* 浪子回头, 1914), which appeared in a Shanghai journal titled *New Theater* (*Xinju* 新剧) that lasted only two issues, and *The Beauty's Sword* (*Meiren jian* 美人剑, 1917), published in the well-established *Fiction Monthly* (*Xiaoshuo yuebao* 小说月报). For these plays and for the remainder of his life Chen would write primarily under the stage name he had adopted, "Dabei" or the "Great Tragedian," a choice of penname later made remarkable by his total rejection of

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66 Although *beidan* is a role category in some forms of *xiqu*, Chen's use of the moniker refers more directly to *beiju* 悲剧 as the term used to describe Western tragedy.
At the end of the 1910s on the grounds of its commercialization. Almost every essay Chen published in the early 1920s contains a condemnation of wenmingxi, yet the platform Chen gained for his writing on aimeide theater, as well as his productions of aimeide theater, derived in large part from his fame as a wenmingxi actor. The discrepancy can be explained in part because of the late origin of the term wenmingxi, explained above: Chen may not have fully associated his acting career from 1911–17 with this term, or may even have considered the domestic melodrama new theater as a separate offshoot from the political new theater. Additionally, Chen would be swept up in the currents of the New Culture movement and its insistence on a radical break in history, not to mention its tendency to condemn whatever had come before it. There is little reference in Chen's writings on theater in the 1920s to the Evolution Troupe or specific wenmingxi productions, even though, as will be seen with his play The Hero and the Beauty, he would return to the period of the Xinhai Revolution in his playwriting.

In the spring of 1918 Chen Dabei went to study in Tokyo, although according to his biographers Li Minniu and Chen Butao he cut many of his classes to work instead in the library, reading and often copying out by hand books on theater criticism and stagecraft, primarily the

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67 Chen alternated with no obvious pattern between signing his work as "Chen Dabei" and simply "Dabei." He also used the penname Wogong 蜗公 (Sir Snail) for some of his fiction, while publishing so seldom under his given name, Chen Tingyi, that the editor of the 1985 Research Materials on Chen Dabei thought that it was another pseudonym.

68 The New Culture rejection of wenmingxi was so thorough that, prior to recent work such as Siyuan Liu's, most knowledge of the form came from memoirs only written decades later, primarily those by Xu Banmei and Ouyang Yuqian. See Xu Banmei 徐半梅, Huaju chuangshi qi huiyilu 话剧创始期回忆录 [Memoir of the Founding Era of Spoken Drama] (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju, 1957); Ouyang Yuqian 欧阳予倩, "Tan wenmingxi" 谈文明戏 [On wenmingxi], Zhongguo huaju yundong washi nian shiliiao ji: 1907–57 中国话剧运动五十年史料集: 1907–57 [Collection of Historical Materials on China's Spoken Drama Movement at Fifty Years, 1907–57] (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju 中国戏剧, 1957), 48-108.
works on contemporary American and British theater he would mine in the coming years. The following spring, before finishing a degree, he left with some ten trunks of books and notes in tow and arrived back in Shanghai mere weeks before the outbreak of the May Fourth protests in Beijing following the assignment of the German-controlled Shandong concession to Japan in the Treaty of Versailles. The New Culture movement had already been in full swing before Chen's departure, while in the interim the central organ of the movement, *New Youth* (*Xin qingnian* 新青年, *La Jeunesse*) had published Hu Shi’s 胡适 (1891–1962) one-act *Greatest Event in Life* (*Zhong shen da shi* 终身大事), canonized as the first original spoken drama in Chinese, to be followed in June with Hu's influential essay on "Ibsenism" and in October with an issue devoted to calls for the reform of Chinese theater.

After returning from Japan in 1919, Chen met Pu Boying 蒲伯英 (Pu Dianjun 蒲殿俊, 1875–1934), who in 1916 had cofounded the newspaper *Morning Bell Post* (*Chenzhong bao* 晨钟报), later retitled the *Morning Post*. Pu, like Hu Shi, Chen Duxiu 陈独秀 (1879–1942), and Fu Sinian 傅斯年 (1896–1950), was among the intellectual reformers of early Republican China who advocated from a position largely exterior to theatrical practice for its reform as part of a broader social revolution. He had contributed to the October issue of *New Youth* devoted to theater reform, but found in Chen Dabei a better investment, given Chen's combination of fame as an actor, practical experience of the stage, and recent research into Western theater, making him an ideal contributor to the paper. In penning a foreword to Chen's *Amateur Theater* in 1921,

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69 Li and Chen, *Biography of Chen Dabei*, 54. Chen's well-educated mother had taught him English from a young age, in addition to his training in the Chinese classics with his retired grandfather.

70 Pu had been a leader in the movement to protect railway rights from being sold to other nations by the Qing government, a catalytic event for the Xinhai Revolution. The other two founders of the *Morning Post* were Liang Qichao 梁启超 (1873–1929) and Tang Hualong 汤化龙 (1874–1918).
Pu used the penname Guan Chang 观场, from the phrase aizi guanchang 矮子观场, "the short man trying to watch the play" (i.e., someone who follows the opinion of others), suggesting a humorous self-deprecation. Pu secured Chen an official position at the Ministry of Finance in Beijing, one that apparently carried a salary with few responsibilities, freeing Chen for his torrent of theatrical activities over the next several years.

In early 1921, while writing for the Morning Post, Chen was also among the founders of the Shanghai-based Theater Society of the Masses (Minzhong xiju she 民众戏剧社), whose primary activity was publishing the journal Drama (Xiju 戏剧).\(^{71}\) In November 1921 Chen and a group of fellow actors with whom he had been staging aimeide productions formalized the Beijing Experimental Theater Society (Beijing shiyan jushe 北京实验剧社).\(^{72}\) At the beginning of 1922 the collective editorship of Drama was transferred to Chen, and its publication moved to Beijing to coincide with the formation of the New China Theater Cooperative (Xin Zhonghua xiju xieshe 新中华戏剧协社), an umbrella organization for aimeide theater societies across the country that boasted forty-eight member societies and more than 2,000 individual members.\(^{73}\)

The following year saw the organization of an acting school in Beijing, the People's Art Theater Training Academy (Renyi xiju zhuanmen xuexiao 人艺戏剧专门学校, November 1922–}

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\(^{71}\) The name "Theater Society of the Masses" was aspirational, as the society had only thirteen members. Its key contribution was in bringing together intellectuals who were committed to the idea of modernized Chinese theater (these included Shen Dehong 沈德鸿 [Mao Dun 茅盾], Zheng Zhenduo 郑振铎, and Ke Yicen 柯一岑) with experienced theater artists (including Wang Youyou, Xu Banmei, Ouyang Yuqian). The other six founding members were Zhang Yuguang 张⾖光, Lu Bingxin 陆冰心, Xiong Foxi 熊佛西, Zhang Jinglu 张静庐, Shen Bingxue 沈冰雪, and Teng Ruoru 滕若渠.

\(^{72}\) The twelve signatories of the founding manifesto were Chen Dabei, He Yushu 何玉书, Chen Qinggao 陈晴皋, Shao Shangyin 邵商隐, Zong Xiang 吟 绥, Li Jianwu 李健吾, Ma Longli 马龙菱, Zheng Guinian 郑桂年, Feng Zhimo 封至模, Wang Bengong 王本公, and Qu Xinzi 曲新之.\(^{73}\) Numerous theater histories state that the journal Drama (Xiju 戏剧) folded after one year, when instead it transferred publishers, at which point the Theater Society of the Masses became inactive. On the membership statistics for the Theater Cooperative, Han Rixin, Research Materials on Chen Dabei, 6.
December 1923) with Chen Dabei as director of studies.\(^{74}\) The school's initial operating costs were provided by Pu Boying, who also financed the construction of a stage for the students. The academy charged no tuition on the premise that after a period of study and practice the students' productions would generate revenue, while the school's stage would be rented out to other performance groups. The school was coeducational, although the founders had difficulty in recruiting female students, who were significantly outnumbered. Nonetheless, theater historians have recently rediscovered the role of the school in promoting integrated male and female casts. This integration took place in advance of the better-known incident of Hong Shen arranging for a double billing of Hu Shi's *Greatest Event in Life* and Ouyang Yuqian's *The Shrew* (*Pofu*, 1922) and sneaking in female actors to play the two women characters in the first play.\(^{75}\) The school's nineteen public performances between May and November of 1923 featured Chen Dabei's plays as their core repertory, in addition to Hu Shi's *Greatest Event in Life*, plays by Ouyang Yuqian and Xiong Foxi (1900–65), among others, and several items from the *wenmingxi* repertoire that Chen adapted.\(^{76}\)

As detailed in Hiroshi Seto and Xiang Yang's studies of the Training Academy, its disbandment after only one year resulted from both internal and external tensions. Internally,
students objected to a lack of prime roles, especially in plays such as *The Hero and the Beauty*, which has only four major parts, and felt that Chen Dabei favored the more talented actors, which was seen as a reinstitution of the system of apprenticeship with a lead actor shared by both *Jingju* and *wenmingxi* instead of the collective *aimeide* ethos. Additionally, the school's curriculum was predominantly technical courses in movement, elocution, costuming, make-up, etc., whereas many of the students had wanted to study dramatic literature, hinting at the direction spoken drama would in fact take in the coming years as it became a form that prioritized literary script over performance. Eventually twenty-six students formed their own theater society while petitioning Pu Boying to remove Chen Dabei, publishing articles critical of Chen's teaching and accusing him of making unwanted advances to the school's female students.

Externally, a group of students recently returned from studies in England, most notably the poet Xu Zhimo 徐志摩 (1897–1931) and Chen Yuan 陈源 (Chen Xiying 陈西滢, 1896–1970), later chair of the English department at Beijing University, professed themselves horrified at *aimeide* theater for not looking and sounding exactly like what they had seen of Western theater abroad. Xu and Chen Yuan staged an audience walkout and published satirical articles to which Pu Boying and others responded in kind. The debate spilled over into the pages of the *Morning Post*, where Chen Yuan published an article critical of Chen Dabei's translation of the British playwright John Galsworthy's 1922 *Loyalties*. Between these internal and external tensions, the training school shuttered permanently in early 1924, while Chen's publishing relationship with the *Morning Post* also ended. The incident illustrates how in this period theater, like other fields of the arts and sciences and even translation, became a staging ground for battles over cultural authority between intellectuals who had studied in Europe or America and those who had studied in Japan or had not studied abroad, which became in this case a jockeying between those with
first-hand knowledge of the modern Western stage and those with a translational relationship to it. This was the case for Chen Dabei, who was among the theater innovators who had read about Western theater in translation but not seen it firsthand, which allowed for innovative intersemiotic translations of Western stage manuals and other written works, rather than direct borrowing.

The ways in which Chinese theater history has forgotten Chen Dabei's contributions have been noted at several points since the 1980s, although without making a significant difference. The 1985 volume *Research Materials on Chen Dabei* edited by Han Rixin, which contains excerpts from a handful of Chen's essays, selections from articles and reviews written about Chen, and a bibliography, remains the most significant attempt to reassess his legacy. More than twenty years ago, in a study of Chen's play *Ms. Youlan* (*Youlan nüshi* 幽兰女士, 1921), Xiaomei Chen noted, "It is shocking […] to see how Chen Dabei has been unjustifiably neglected in the contemporary Chinese scholarship." Before the 2013 publication of a biography, *From Pupa to Butterfly: A Biography of Chen Dabei, Pioneer of Modern Chinese Theater*, by Li Minniu and Chen's grandson Chen Butao, many of the basic details of his life were unknown. While a decent handful of articles have appeared since 2000, a full study of Chen's work and of the production

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77 For earlier articles on Chen's contributions, see Han Rixin 韓日新, *Chen Dabei zai huaju mengya shiqi de gongxian* [Chen Dabei's Contributions to the First Period of Spoken Drama], in Han, *Research Material on Chen Dabei*, 136-45; Wu Shengwu 吴绳武, *Yi ge zaoqi huaju fendouzhe zuji—Chen Dabei de xiju huodong yu gongxian* [The Traces of One Man's Struggle in the Early Period of Spoken Drama—Chen Dabei's Theatrical Activities and Contributions], *Hundred Schools in Arts* (August 1992), 48-54; Hu Decai 胡德才, *Chen Dabei dui Zhongguo huaju fazhan de gongxian* [Chen Dabei's Contributions to the Development of Chinese Spoken Drama], *Journal of China Three Gorges University* (November 2000).

history of the aimeide theater movement remains to be undertaken.\(^79\) The most significant impediment continues to be that so little of Chen Dabei's writing has been republished. Beyond reprints of *Amateur Theater* and several one-act farces, Chen Dabei's only full-length play to have much of an afterlife beyond the 1920s is *Ms. Youlan*, which appeared in the theater volume of the influential 1935 *Compendium of the New Chinese Literature* (*Zhongguo xin wenxue daxi* 中国新文学大系); *Ms. Youlan* and *Fourth Zhang's Wife* were also both printed in 1929 as stand-alone editions that are now exceedingly rare. Aside from these, Chen Dabei's plays and essays are available only in the periodicals where they originally appeared. The following sections of this chapter will return to the scene of the aimeide movement both on the page and on the stage, through close examination of several of Chen Dabei's writings in creative, critical, theoretical, and translation modes in their original periodical form as well as the records of specific performances.

**The Aimeide Page: Chen Dabei and the Morning Post**

The story of the aimeide theater and of modern Chinese literature is inextricable from the

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"fukan" 副刊 or "supplement" to the Beijing *Morning Post*, where Chen Dabei published extensively throughout 1920–23. The *Morning Post's* organizers were all significant political figures, yet, as Xiaoqun Xu has argued, the newspaper, and especially this arts and culture supplement, moved away from being a political mouthpiece shortly after its founding, "due to the editors' understanding of the functions of a newspaper as a public organ for society." 80 In a study of the supplement, Xu extrapolates that its readership included college and high school students and anyone with the equivalent of a college or high school education, both in Beijing and in cities across the country, which, though quite general, suggests the paper's appeal across factional lines and its wide reach. Over the course of its first half-decade the newspaper gradually replaced articles written in literary Chinese with ones in the emerging written vernacular. 81 The newspaper appeared seven days a week in a daily printing of nearly 10,000 copies. 82

A few features of the *Morning Post* are of particular relevance to understanding how *aimeide* theater was introduced to its readers. Newspapers of the late Qing and early Republican periods often devoted a section to recreational reading, pages that were at first the domain of popular literature. Intellectuals of the New Culture and May Fourth movements made a concerted effort to colonize these pages because of their wide readerships. 83 The corresponding section of the *Morning Post* appeared for five years on page 7 of the newspaper, identifiable by

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80 Xiaoqun Xu, *Cosmopolitanism, Nationalism, and Individualism in Modern China: The Chenbao Fukan and the New Culture Era, 1918–1928*, (Lexington Books, 2014), 21. Although *fukan* are sometimes referred to as "literary supplements," I have used "arts and culture supplement" as a closer approximation of the section's contents.
81 Ibid., 24.
the shape of the column headers, but without a formal separation from the rest of the paper. In October 1921 the page 7 section was broken out into a separate four-page arts and culture supplement and renamed the *Morning Post fujuan* 副镌, later *fukan* 副刊.\(^{84}\) The arts and culture supplement of the *Morning Post* was arguably the most prominent among the four major newspaper supplements of the 1920s, and other newspapers would adopt the name *fukan* to title similar sections.\(^{85}\) Each copy of the supplement in the early 1920s might contain sections on political science, social science, philosophy, natural science, travel, and miscellanea (*zagan* 杂感, the genre of random insights), in addition to fiction, theater, poetry, and travel accounts; within any of these fields, there might be original contributions, translations, lecture transcriptions, field reports, or book reviews. Even at a cultural moment when translation was prominent, the *Morning Post* supplement foregrounded translation as a practice on par with other forms of contribution, devoting columns specifically to translation as well as running translated items in different columns; as Xiaoqun Xu notes, the supplement "regularly—in every issue—featured translated works in literature, philosophy, biographies, sciences, and social sciences from foreign countries through Japanese, English, French, German, and Russian languages."\(^{86}\)

The translators were always credited, although they often, like contributors in all areas, deployed

\(^{84}\) Examining issues both before and after this date show that the separation did not in and of itself make a significant impact on the section's size, because the four-page supplement was at a smaller trim. The number and type of articles remained mostly the same, with many serialized items continuing across the formation of the separate *fukan*. However, since the *fukan*, like the newspaper, would be collected and published in book form at the end of each month, it did mean that there could be a separate readership who purchased only the supplement. On the publication of monthly and yearly collected volumes, see Xu, *Cosmopolitanism, Nationalism, and Individualism*, 21.

\(^{85}\) The other three were *Lamp for Learning* (*Xue deng* 学灯, est. 1918) of the Shanghai *China Times* (*Shishi xinbao* 时事新报), *Awakening* (*Juewu* 觉悟, est. 1919) of the Shanghai Republican Daily (*Minguo ribao* 民国日报), and the *Capital News* supplement (*Jingbao fukan* 京报副刊, est. 1924) of the Beijing *Capital News* started by Sun Fuyuan after he left the *Morning Post*.

\(^{86}\) Xu, *Cosmopolitanism, Nationalism, and Individualism*, 4.
pennames. This practice suggests that the translators also lent their imprimatur to the pieces selected for translation. For example, Chen Dabei's name appearing as translator for Evelyne Hilliard's "What is Educational Dramatics—Its Results" (1917, trans. October 1921) would signal that the piece was of interest to readers who had been following the installments of *Amateur Theater*.87

The vast majority of articles in the *Morning Post* supplement ran for more than one installment and were serialized at irregular intervals, so that the interested reader would trace an article, a debate, or a piece of fiction across weeks if not months.88 Letters to contributors and contributor responses were also published in installments, rather than appearing on the same page the same day, so that a letter criticizing a regular contributor or leading figure, no matter the status of the writer, had its day in the sun. The sole consistent criterion appears to have been that only a single item in a given field would appear per issue, so that one rarely finds more than one item of fiction, theater, social science, political theory, lecture notes, travelogue, etc. in a given date of the supplement. On several occasions, however, exceptions were made to increase coverage of *aimi de* theater, for example, in order to include letters from readers about performances of Chen Dabei's plays *Hero and Beauty* and *Unspeakable* (*Shuo bu chu* 说不出) by the Beijing Experimental Theater Society in October and December of 1921.

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87 Evelyne Hilliard, Theodora McCormick, and Kate Oglebay, *Amateur and Educational Dramatics* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1917): 1-10; translated by Chen Dabei as *Jiaoyu de xiju zhi yiyi yu xiaoguo* 教育的戏剧之意义与效果, *Morning Post* supplement (October 12-17, 1921). Articles cited to the *Morning Post* were consulted in the photoreprint issued by Renmin Press in 1980-81 and, for dates after October 11, 1921, also in the digitized pages in the Shanghai Library's *Chinese Periodical Full-Text Database*. 88 Each item appeared with a column header that indicated the subject matter, but these headers were multifold; in theater alone, they included Theater Discussion, Theater Criticism, Theater Review, Theater Research, Theater Script, Theater Debate. They were also not strictly applied, so that similar articles might not have the same header, or installments of a single article might appear under different headers across multiple issues.
The supplement's editors during the period when Chen Dabei wrote for the newspaper, Li Dazhao 李大钊 (1888–1927, founding member of the Chinese Communist Party), from February 1919 to July 1920, followed by Sun Fuyuan 孙伏园 (1894–1966), took considerable care to stage lively debates and forums among different contributors. Specific columns could be the purview of certain factions, as was the case with the Free Forum (Ziyou luntan 自由论坛), in which leading voices of the New Culture movement predominated. Leo Ou-fan Lee suggests on the basis of this Free Forum column that the supplement in the 1920s and 30s represented the May Fourth enlightenment project growing "increasingly elitist," as "[s]mall groups of thinkers competed with one another in order to propagate their own causes or otherwise pontificate what they considered to be the truth to their imagined audience of followers."

89 Xiaoqun Xu argues instead that reading the supplement as a whole suggests a commitment to a diversity of viewpoints from a conscientious editorship that published articles from various corners, considered unsolicited submissions seriously, and regularly printed letters that were heavily critical of regular contributors. Xu's history ends in 1928, which may account in part for the differing interpretations. The supplement's perspective in the late 1910s and early 1920s was broad enough to serialize translations of Karl Marx's Das Kapital and Leonard Trelawny Hobhouse's Social Evolution and Political Theory alongside essays introducing and discussing a wide spectrum of forms of government that might bring stability to a country parceled into warlord-controlled territories. Chen Dabei and others' theater contributions to the paper,

especially those of the aimeide movement, were at once aimed at a larger population of enthusiastic participants while also dividing their audience by divisively attacking the "old theater" and wenmingxi. As an indication of the relatively generous stance of Morning Post's editors, Pu Boying, who acted as general manager, waited until the entire eight-month serialization of Chen Dabei's Amateur Theater had ended to publish an article indicating that he disagreed with Chen's entire premise that an amateur theater could exist without a corresponding professional theater.

The fukan of the Beijing Morning Post has long been recognized for its central role in the formation of modern Chinese literature for several reasons. First, from the late 1910s forward it acted as a major venue for publishing the "new literature"; second, in 1923 the supplement formalized a relationship with the Literary Association (Wenxue yanjiu hui 文学研究会); and, third, for its affiliation from 1925 with the Crescent Moon (Xin yue 新月) society (on the Crescent Moon society, see Chapter Two). Fourth, and perhaps most influentially, the supplement was the forum where the brothers Lu Xun 鲁迅 (1881–1936) and Zhuo Zuoren 周作人 (1885–1967) published much of their writing, including translations, essays, poems, and fiction, until late 1924. One of Zhou Zuoren's most significant essay collections, In My Own Garden (Ziji de yuandi 自己的园地) was serialized in the fukan from late 1921 to early 1922, the same period during which Lu Xun's seminal "True Story of Ah Q" (A Q zhengzhuan 阿 Q 正传) was published in nine installments. What has been missing from literary histories is that the

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counterpoint between Lu and Zhou, and among the other major literary figures who published in the same pages, took place against a steady rhythm of articles on the aimeide theater. By 1921, nearly every issue of the fukan included a segment related to theater, whether an installment of Chen's Amateur Theater, an original script by Chen or another playwright, a translated script, a performance review, or an occasional article on a specific aspect of performance, dramaturgy, staging technique, or playwriting. The final issue of 1921 featured no fewer than three advertisements relating to Chen Dabei's publishing projects in support of aimeide theater: an advertisement for the journal Drama (which ran daily in the supplement throughout 1921 and 1922); an advertisement for a book titled On the Art of Costuming and Makeup for Theater (Xiju de huazhuang shu 戏剧的化妆术) translated by Chen; and an advertisement for a stand-alone volume of Amateur Theater from the Morning Post's book publishing arm. [Figures 1.2, 1.3, 1.4] The last item noted that the publication of Amateur Theater was being accelerated ahead of the volume that was supposed to precede it in the series, Fiction by Famous Foreign Authors (Waiguo mingjia xiaoshuo ji 外国名家小说集). The first issue of 1921 announced a new column titled "Amateur News" (Aimeide xiaoxi 爱美的消息), which would carry reviews, reports from the field, survey articles, and summaries of aimeide activities.

This crescendo of publications relating to the aimeide theater had begun with the serialization of Amateur Theater from April of 1921. To place Chen Dabei's book-length essay in relation to its context in the fukan, consider page 7 of the April 23, 1921, Morning Post. [Figure 1.5] The installment from Amateur Theater appearing at bottom left is the opening section of the text after the foreword by Pu Boying on April 20 and the author's general introduction on April

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91 I plan to write a separate article on the relationship between Lu Xun's True Story of Ah Q and Chen Dabei's one-act play A Patriotic Thief (Aiguo zei 爱国贼), which appeared alongside it.
Figures 1.2, 1.3, 1.4

Advertisements the Beijing *Morning Post*'s arts and culture supplement, December 31, 1921 for (left-to-right) the journal *Drama, On the Art of Costuming and Makeup for Theater*, translated by Chen Dabei, and the book publication of *Amateur Theater*. 
Figure 1.5

Page 7, the *fukan* or arts and culture supplement page of the Beijing *Morning Post*, April 23, 1921.
21, and appears here under the header Theater Research. The other items on the page include (running from top right to bottom left): under the header Scientific Treatises, a continuation of the article "Research on the Earth's Interior" (Diqiu neibu zhi yanjiu 地球内部之研究), specifically sections on determining the earth's core as molten or solid, by Luo Songyan 罗松岩 (penname of Luo Yunlin 罗运磷, 1896–1927); under the header Fiction, an installment of the short story "Chinmoku no tō" ("Tower of Silence," 1910) by Mori Ōgai 森鸥外 (1862–1922), translated from the Japanese by Lu Xun; under the header Travelogue, a continuation of "From Shanghai through France to London" (Cong Shanghai jingguo Faguo dao Lundun 从上海经过法国到伦敦) by Xu Yanzhi 徐彦之 (1897–1940); and under Poetry, "She" (Ta 她) by Shaoping 少平, taking as its title the newfangled character used as a pronoun for the feminine third person, which Liu Bannong had begun advocating for the previous August with his own poem addressed to ta 她.92

The juxtaposition of Mori Ōgai's story in Lu Xun's translation to this first installment of Amateur Theater could hardly be more apt. "Tower of Silence" satirizes the idea of Western books introducing dangerous or subversive ideas, including the paragraph:

Those who love to read the books of people such as Saint-Simon, or translate Marx's Das Kapital, make arguments on behalf of the socialists, while those who introduce Bakunin and Kropotkin make arguments on behalf of the anarchists. Still, those who read and translate do not necessarily follow the '-isms' of what they read or translate, so it is hard to say whether they approve, but one also cannot say there is no reason for their being

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92 The pronoun 他 had been previously used for both genders. For Chen Dabei's contribution to the discussion of gendered pronouns, see "Juben shang de 'yi' he 'ta'" "剧本上的'伊'和'她' [On 'Yi' (She) and 'Ta' (She) in Scripts], Drama 1:1 (1921): 102-3.
under suspicion.93

Below this, the first installment of Amateur Theater explains the etymology of aimeide as a translation of "amateur," tracing the word to its French and earlier Latin roots. Chen then addresses how the term is intended to replace existing translations of "amateur" that carry connotations at odds with his idea of an amateur theater, such as qingke 请客, "invited guests," which implied hangers-on who took part in performances by the private acting troupes of wealthy households, or kechuan 客串, "guest participants," and keyou 客友, "audience friends," which both refer to audience enthusiasts taking part in professional performances. Aimeide was also meant to replace the word for "amateur" borrowed from Japanese, shiroto 素人, which was easily misinterpreted as read in Chinese as suren, meaning a person who "eats plainly" or "dresses plainly." Chen offers in the place of these types of amateurs a definition of aimeide as "anyone who independently studies a type of art," and of aimeide xiju as "theater performed by aimeide people [i.e., people who love beauty]."94 Further, all nations have aimeide theaters that arise to oppose their professional theaters.

Just as the term aimeide both translates "amateur" and comes to mean something other than what it translates, the aimeide theater movement draws, with significant differences, from the example of other amateur theater movements. Chen Dabei and his colleagues in the Theater Society of the Masses saw their work as being in a direct lineage with the French Théâtre Libre and the British Independent Theater, with Chen's critical and theoretical writing in closest

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93 "爱看 Saint-Simon（圣西蒙）一流人的书的，或者译了 Marx（马克思）的「资本论」的，便作为社会主义者论，绍介了 Bakunin（巴枯宁）Kropodkin（克鲁巴金）的，便作为无政府主义者论，虽然因为看的和译的未必便遵奉那主义，所以难于立刻教人首肯，但也还不能说没有受着嫌疑的理由。" This and all translations not otherwise cited are mine.

94 "大凡自由研究一种艺术的人都可称为爱美的 […] 爱美的戏剧，自然不用解释是爱美的人所演的戏剧了。"
conversation with the American Little Theater movement.\textsuperscript{95} Chen projects onto both amateur and professional theaters of Europe and America his ideal of a theater of perfect balance between performance and literature, one that "equally performs scripts with literary worth and emphasizes the art of the stage."\textsuperscript{96} However, he draws a sharp contrast between these theaters and that of China in insisting that, whereas in other nations amateur theater appeared alongside professional theater, China's aimeide theater has no corresponding professional stage. Nor should it, when "today's professional theater (whether new or old), is, in short, people lacking knowledge performing plays lacking consciousness"; Chen refers to all forms of professionalized theater, whether xiqu or wenmingxi, as non-theater (fei-xiju 非戏剧) and discounts amateur performers of xiqu as lacking any sense of modernity.\textsuperscript{97} Amateur Theater and Chen's other essays of this period return relentlessly to the incompatibility of an aesthetic theater and a professional theater: not only commercial theater, but also any theater in which the practitioners rely on performing to earn a living. Instead of professional theater companies, the aimeide theater movement would be formed from the convergence of student groups, which were already in Chen's view aimeide in practice by virtue of being non-professional, and ad-hoc theater companies that performed at holidays, commemorations, and charity events. Indeed, while Chen advised on many student productions in the early 1920s, the productions for which he convened fellow new theater enthusiasts, including the Experimental Theater Society, primarily performed at charity

\textsuperscript{95} The founding declaration of the People's Theater Society invoked both the French Théâtre Libre and the British Independent Theater; see Minzhong xiju she xuanyan ji jianzhang 民众戏剧社宣言暨简章 [Declaration and Bylaws of the Theater Society of the Masses], Drama 1:1, 95-6. Their journal was modelled on the Drama League of America's The Drama.

\textsuperscript{96} "一样都是表演文学上有价值的剧本, 一样都注重舞台上底艺术," Chen Dabei, Amateur Theater, 4. Page references to the reprint Aimeide xiju 爱美的戏剧 (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 2011).

\textsuperscript{97} "现在中国底职业的戏剧（无论新的旧的），根本上一句话，就是'以无知识的人演无意识的戏'," ibid., 6.
fundraising events, sometimes at Beijing's preeminent theaters, and usually in programming paired with *Jingju* performances. Pu Boying, as mentioned above, as well as Chen's colleagues in the Theater Society of the Masses objected to his seemingly implausible insistence on an aesthetic, amateur theater movement operating with no connection to any professional theater in passages such as the following:

> I am not advocating that in the future, after reform and progress, there must never be a professional theater, nor am I saying that at every point in time professional theater is always bad. But with regard to the present, in order to remedy the condition of non-theater, and lead it onto the road of "modern theater," this responsibility and hope cannot be placed on the shoulders of anyone other than those who practice *aimeide* theater.  

Chen would eventually shift to agree with Pu in recasting the *aimeide* theater as an avant-garde of the "main force" (*zhuli jun* 主力军) of the modern professional theater that, they hoped, would one day follow.

The admixture of translation with supplementation seen in the term *aimeide* and in Chen Dabei's theorization of *aimeide* theater in relation to the amateur theater movements of other nations recapitulates at the level of the text of *Amateur Theater*. As Chen explains in the general introduction, the essays forming this text combine translation with original critical and theoretical writing. Originally, he writes, he had intended to translate *Practical Stage Directing for Amateurs* (1916) by Emerson Taylor (1874–1932); however, realizing that Taylor's examples from the American stage would be of limited use to a Chinese audience, he found it "better to use

98 "我并非主张将来改良进步之后永远不许有职业的戏剧，也不是说无论何时，凡是职业的戏剧就不好。但是就目前而论，要把这非戏剧底状态挽救过来，使他走上“现代戏剧”底路，这个责任和希望，却非加在爱美的戏剧家身上不可," ibid.

99 See Pu Boying, *Wo zhuzhang tichang zhiye de xiju* 我主张提倡职业的戏剧 [I Support Advocating for Professional Theater], *Morning Post* supplement (November 28-9, 1921) and *Drama* 1:5 (1921): 10-15; Chen Dabei, *Weishenme wo meiyou tichang zhiye de xiju* 为什么我没有提倡职业的戏剧 [Why I Have Not Advocated for a Professional Theater], *Drama* 2:1 (1922), 7-10.
books on theater from advanced nations as a basis to compile a book specialized for Chinese readers to teach essential knowledge and for practical use."\(^{100}\) *Amateur Theater* comprises what can be termed a composite translation, juxtaposing sections from multiple contemporary American publications on theater alongside Chen's insights and criticism. Chen gives as his primary source texts Taylor's volume, along with *The New Movement in the Theater* (1914) by Sheldon Cheney (1886–1980, editor of *Theatre Arts Magazine*) and *The Twentieth Century Theater: Observations on the Contemporary English and American Stage* (1918) by William Lyon Phelps (1865–1943), with additional material from other sources including Arthur Hornblow (1865–1942, editor of *Theatre Magazine*).\(^{101}\) For example, even though Pu Boying's preface praises the original organization of *Amateur Theater*, on a formal, structural level its chapter divisions on how to select plays, organize performance troupes, schedule rehearsals, establish requirements for actors, as well as makeup and costumes, blocking, lighting, and backdrops, translate precisely the table of contents of Taylor's *Practical Stage Directing*. At the same time, even cursory comparison of the content reveals how Chen's role in relation to his sources uses translation as a mask for voicing his advocacy of what *aimeide* theater should be in the Chinese context. The obscuring of whether such a text should rightly be called translation, compilation, or original critical writing extends to the periodical page as well: the first several instalments of *Amateur Theater* in the *Morning Post* credit Chen as editor, before crediting him eventually as author.

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\(^{100}\) "不如拿人家先进国底戏剧书做基础，编一部专为中国入灌输常识而且可以眼前实用的书，" Chen, *Amateur Theater*, 3.

A parallel bait-and-switch between translation and criticism appears in Chen Dabei's *Bianju de jishu* (编剧的技术), published in three parts in *Drama*, which both is and is not a translation of *Dramatic Technique* (1919) by George Pierce Baker (1866–1935), who taught the influential 49 Workshop in playwriting at Harvard University before founding the Yale School of Drama.¹⁰² The text includes translation of text from Baker alongside excerpts from Brander Matthews (1852–1939), who taught dramatic literature at Columbia University, and the Scottish theater critic William Archer (1856–1924), among others, with the specific examples similarly replaced by ones drawn from Chen's theatrical background and experience. In the introduction Chen defends this style of highly adaptive translation in a reflection on whether what he is doing is actually translation or original composition: he had originally planned a "direct" (*zhì yì* 直译) translation of Baker's *Dramatic Technique*, but again it occurred to him that the reader familiar with Baker's examples would presumably read English and not need the translation, whereas the examples would be meaningless to most Chinese readers. Instead, "I mixed and matched the original text combining excerpts [from *Dramatic Technique*] and with the best parts of other texts while adding my own opinions."¹⁰³

Chen Dabei was hardly unique in this combination of translation and original criticism, but his writing of the early 1920s constitutes a conscious practice of synthesizing the two, which in turn necessitates rethinking the *aimeide* theater movement in terms of translation. Considering Chen's *Amateur Theater* and his critical and theoretical writings on *aimeide* theater more broadly, several interrelated elements come to the fore. The first is that Chen did not argue so

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much for an imitation of Western theater or of Western amateur, aesthetic, little, or independent theater movements, as for an interpretive, non-literal translation of them. Second, implicit in Chen's theory of aimeide theater is the assumption that the intrasemiotic translation of Western theatrical forms into the Chinese context was available through interlingual translation of handbooks, critical studies, and educational treatises: Sheldon Cheney's writings on "the new movement" of aesthetic drama and psychologic drama, Taylor on the pragmatics of amateur staging, Baker and Matthews on playwriting, etc. In other words, the interlingual translation of these works followed by intersemiotic experimentation with the techniques they presented in staged productions would produce modern forms of theater. Chen Dabei's translation of aimeide theater on a global or intrasemiotic level of form was thus a two-step interlingual-intersemiotic translation: interlingual translation of texts describing forms of Western theater, primarily the contemporary American little theater, followed by intersemiotic translation in the productions that followed.

After publishing *Amateur Theater*, Chen Dabei would concentrate on the intersemiotic staging of aimeide theater, but at the time of its writing his focus was on textual research: "Our circumstances are not those of our Western amateur comrades; we have received the mission of creating China's new theater, so at the very least we should be more literate and read more books than professional theater artists (*xiju jia*)."104 *Xiju jia* or "theater artist" is used here in the broader sense of anyone who takes part in theatrical production, and not in today's sense of a playwright, which is another example of how *xiju* would shift in meaning over time from referring to staged performance to dramatic literature.

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As discussed above in the context of the People's Art Theater Training Academy, students who returned from Europe and America including Xu Zhimo, Chen Yuan, and later on Hong Shen (1894–1955, considered one of the three founders of spoken drama), would profess themselves horrified at the aimeide theater for not being more literally representative of the contemporary Western stage, but of course this was not quite the point. Should Chen's vision for the interlingual-intersemiotic translation of amateur theater seem mildly quixotic in retrospect, it should be remembered that the situation of the Chinese amateur theater artists was in some ways analogous to that of their American counterparts outside of the major cultural centers on the East Coast. These American theater artists formed the primary readership for the handbooks and guides Chen translated, in a situation decried in 1918 by one of their authors, William Lyon Phelps, in terms not dissimilar to Chen's comparison of contemporaneous Chinese theater to the theaters of Europe and the United States:

What are the terms by which an American may be permitted to witness [any major new play] at all? It is produced at one theatre in one town by one company. The management hopes that it will run there at least a year. During that year if any person in Cleveland or Buffalo or St. Louis or Chicago or Salt Lake City happens to want to hear this drama performed, he must journey to New York, and succeed in the endeavour to buy a seat at the particular building where it is being produced. After the lapse of a year, or perhaps two or three years, it may be taken on the road, and it may or may not come within the range of the people living in the towns I have mentioned. [...] In some European countries, when a new play is produced in one of the large cities and the thing is successful, within a week every other city and many of the small towns are enjoying the same piece. This means that everybody in the country is talking about the same play at the same time — discussing it, arguing about it, reading criticisms of it in the local

105 The group of Chinese students who studied theater in the United States in the mid-1920s and started the "national theater movement" (guoju yundong 国剧运动) on their return were largely inspired by the aimeide movement. On the national theater movement, see Siyuan Liu, "Cross Currents of Modern Theatre and China’s National Theatre Movement of 1925–1926," *Asian Theatre Journal* 33:1 (2016), 1-35.
Recovering Chen Dabei's writings on aimeide theater and the aimeide theater movement itself reveals how closely Chen and his colleagues of the early 1920s were in conversation with theatrical modernism as it unfolded in America, even if that conversation was predominantly one-sided; the following chapters will consider the converse influence of Chinese theater artists such as Lin Huiyin and John Wong-Quincey who studied in newly-founded theater programs at American universities. That the mediation in this case was primarily textual rather than experiential seems also fitting because it was the interplay of written and spoken text, of script and speech, as represented onstage, that defined Chen Dabei's playwriting.

The Aimeide Stage: On Chen Dabei's The Hero and the Beauty

At a century's remove it is difficult to recapture the strangeness of early Chinese dialogue plays, or the estrangement of their audiences in a performance culture where actors onstage simply speaking with each other jettisoned the stylization of xiqu and its fundamental linking of performance to music and poetry. The replacement of the skills of singing, recitative, dance, and acrobatics (chang nian zuo da 唱念做打) with the plain hua or conversational speech forced a crisis in the relationship between the written text and the spoken word, especially when it came to the staged word. Perhaps no "spoken drama" playwright probed this question of speech as

106 William Lyon Phelps, The Twentieth Century Theatre, 14-5.
extensively and revealingly as Chen Dabei. His plays of the early 1920s repeat almost obsessively situations of halting or insufficient speech, particularly through the recurring figure of a mute or stuttering fool. In the one-act farce *The People's Benefactor* (*Pingmin de enren* 平民的恩人), a servant of this type turns out to be a detective in disguise.\(^{108}\) Chen would also experiment with pantomimes, which he called "mute plays" (*yaju* 哑剧), in order to isolate the elements of theater as a free-standing art form (*duli de yishu* 独立的艺术) distinct from literary art:

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\text{[A]t present the authors of China's local new literature, as well as those "masters of wenmingxi," take the stage to be an arena for issuing [synonymous with "publishing"] spoken and written language. Literature can only annex one part of theater—not the entire body of theater. This part is the spoken and written language that theater uses. The pantomime [mute play] only uses the body's movements and poses, without using spoken or written language at all. [...] Does theater require the assistance of spoken and written language? Only a pantomime can clarify this question for us.}^{109}\]

This passage demonstrates the centrality of experimentation to *aimeide* theater practice in questioning even the use of spoken dialogue that distinguished it most clearly from *xiqu*. In addition, Chen defines the *aimeide* theater as a scripted form of theater, in contrast to scenario-based *wenmingxi*, while recognizing at this early point in 1921 how an excessive emphasis on script could lead to theater being annexed by literature. The play analyzed in this section, Chen's *The Hero and the Beauty*, takes a different angle on the same subjects in its exploration through


\(^{109}\) "现在中国土自新文学家, 下至那班不用剧本随口胡？的「文明新剧大家」, 都把舞台当作一种发表语言文字底场所。文学所能并吞的戏剧只是戏剧底一部分--不是戏剧底全体。这一部分就是戏剧所用的语言文字。哑剧只用身体底动作与姿势，而绝对的不用语言文字。 [...] 戏剧必需求助于语言文字吗? 这个问题只有哑剧能向我们明明白白地解答出来," *Morning Post* (August 14 and 15): 7; I am planning a separate article on the staging of Chen Dabei's *Unspeakable*. 79
the layering of language, both spoken and written, over the body and, later, the corpse of its central woman character.

Chen Dabei's *The Hero and the Beauty* was serialized in the *Morning Post* page 7 section from July 12 to August 10, 1920. The call by Hu Shi and others in *New Youth* for Chinese theater to adopt Western realism as the way forward in 1918 had resulted in a lively business of translating scripts from European languages, but original Chinese plays in this style proved much harder to come by, and those written in the late 1910s and well into the 1920s were primarily short farces such as Hu's own *Greatest Event in Life*. Against this backdrop, Chen's *Hero and Beauty* appears all the more noteworthy as a fully developed five-act tragedy, a genre that was itself at odds with the preference in Chinese theater for plays to end with a happy reunion (*tuanyuan* 团圆) regardless of what may have come before. Appropriately enough, the first installment in the *Morning Post* followed an article on "Naturalism in Art" by Guo Shaoyu 郭绍虞 (1893–1984), since naturalism is the genre most closely adopted. *Hero and Beauty* offers an example of Chen's translation of Western naturalism (and of tragedy) at the level of form. However, naturalism was also a contrast to other plays Chen was writing at the time such as the surreal *Two Freedoms* (*Shuang jiefang* 双解放), in which a husband and wife magically switch bodies, the ghost play *Is it Human?* (*Shi ren ma* 是人吗?), his expressive pantomime

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110 On the proliferation of translated plays from Western languages, Xiaomei Chen provides the figures of 170 plays by seventy playwrights between 1917 and 1924, *Modern Chinese Drama*, 5. For lists of plays translated in the 1910s-20s, see Bernd Eberstein, *Das chinesische Theater im 20. Jahrhundert* [Twentieth-Century Chinese Theater] (Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz, 1983) and Tian Qin 田禽, *Zhongguo xiju yundong* 中国戏剧运动 [Chinese Theater Movement] (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1944).

111 Hu Decai makes the point that Chen Dabei was publishing full-length plays such as *The Hero and the Beauty* several years before the playwrights better-known as spoken drama pioneers—Ouyang Yuqian, Hong Shen, Tian Han, Yu Shangyuan 余上沅 (1897–1970), Guo Moruo 郭沫若 (1892–1978) and Ding Xiilin—started publishing original scripts, *Zhongguo xiandai xiju wenxueshi* 中国现代喜剧文学史 [Literary History of Chinese Comic Drama] (Wuhan: Wuhan Press, 2000), 60.
Unspeakable, or madcap and histrionic farces such as Benefactor of the People.

Chen Dabeı’s commitment to experiment and revision through staging can also be seen when the 1920 Hero and Beauty is compared to the version published almost a decade later and retitled Fourth Zhang's Wife (Zhang Si Taitai 張四太太). While the general scenario and central characters remain the same, the radically revised play shares fewer than a dozen lines of dialogue with the earlier version. Reviews and letters suggest that the changes were made over the course of the 1920s as the play was rehearsed and performed by the Beijing Experimental Theater Society, the People's Theater Art Training Academy, the Shanghai Theater Collective (Shanghai xiju xieshe 上海戏剧协社), and aimeide troupes across the country. Here we can see one aspect of what differentiates the aimeide theater as practiced by Chen from both the wenmingxi that came before and later huaju, namely its focus on scripted drama versus improvised dialogue, but also on the script as something staged rather than as something adhered to as literary text. That the play was imagined from the start as a performed text, rather than as one of the "bookshelf plays" (shujia de juben 书架的剧本) that Chen laments in Amateur Theater, is further emphasized by the words in small font printed over the title in each installment of Hero and Beauty as it was serialized: shiyong juben 实用剧本, or a script for practical use. [Figure 1.6]

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112 Li and Chen, Biography of Chen Dabeı, and Han, Research Material on Chen Dabeı, both date the publication of Fourth Chen's Wife (Shanghai: Xiandai Press) to 1929; the 1931 edition consulted for this chapter is marked as a second edition. Since only a single copy of the 1931 edition, and none of the 1929 edition, are currently available in library collections, it has not been possible to confirm what changes, if any, were made between the first and second editions.

113 Chen uses a similar phrasing in the second chapter of Amateur Theater: "Scripts suitable for our practical use should be longer than three acts but shorter than six, and be between two and three hours in duration," "适合我们实用的剧本大概是以三幕以上," 21. As quoted above, he also referred to Amateur Theater as a book "for practical use."

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Figure 1.6

Column from the Beijing *Morning Post*, July 12, 1920. On the right, a passage from Guo Shaoyu's "Naturalism in Art." On the left, the title and byline of Chen Dabei’s *The Hero and the Beauty*:

Play

*for practical use*

*The Hero and the Beauty*

Chen Dabei
The Hero and the Beauty foregrounds themes prominent in Chen Dabei's plays of the early 1920s, including misplaced loyalty, gratitude versus ingratitude, and kindness or charity offered with self-serving motivations. The play also takes to an extreme degree the iconoclasm seen on occasion in the other plays, such as the actual idol smashed onstage in Unspeakable. Here this iconoclasm is directed at the ideal of "the hero and his beautiful woman," or, in Chen's words, the "poison of the old romances," with each character in the play treated with relentless pessimism, and none more so than the titular hero and beauty. The trope of the hero and beauty (yingxiong meiren 英雄美人) was a variation on a pairing prominent in Chinese romances, that of the scholar and beauty (caizi jiaren 才子佳人). The circumstances of the play's "beauty," Lin Yaqin 林雅琴, anticipate the question raised by Lu Xun in a well-known lecture on Henrik Ibsen's (1828–1906) A Doll's House (Et dukkehjem, 1879), "What Happens after Nora Leaves Home?" (Nuola zou hou zenyang? 娜拉走后怎样?, 1923), or, closer to home, what happens to Yamei in Hu Shi's Greatest Event of Life after she blithely leaves home with her boyfriend over her parents' objections. In May Fourth discourse, Nora and Yamei represented the often idealized "new woman" (xin nüxing 新女性) breaking away from traditional family structures who also symbolized the modernizing nation. Chen Dabei, like Lu Xun, imagines the non-ideal consequences for a student much like Yamei, through Lin Yaqin, who some years before the play's opening has fled an arranged marriage. The titular "hero" Zhang Hanguang 张

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114 "「英雄美人」的旧小说毒," Chen Dabei, Jin wan qi dian zai Xiangguang huiguan yan de Yingxiong yu meiren shuoming shu 今晚七点在湖广会馆演的「英雄与美人」说明书 [Synopsis of The Hero and the Beauty in Performance Tonight at 7pm at the Huguang Guild Theater], Morning Post (October 10, 1921): 7.

115 Lu Xun's December 1923 lecture on Ibsen's Doll House and the Nora figure was delivered at the Beijing Women's Higher Normal School, where the students' premiere of Nora (Nuola 娜拉, translated by Hu Shi and Luo Jialun 罗家伦, New Youth 4:6 [1918]: 508-72) earlier in the year had provoked the objections of Xu Zhimo and Chen Yuan to the aimeide theater.
汉光， whose name reads literally as "Zhang, the light of the Han" or, by extension, "Zhang who recovers [the land of] the Han," is a revolutionary leader dedicated to the overthrow of the Manchu Qing rulers. The play takes place in the midst of the 1911 Xinhai Revolution against the Qing dynasty, and Chen's commentary on *Hero and Beauty* suggests that it repudiates the heroic plays in which he performed with the Evolution Troupe at that time.  

In a manner familiar from the "well-made play" or "problem play," the set-up for the central conflicts of *Hero and Beauty* has taken place before the play's opening scene, as Chen Dabei emphasizes in a synopsis published in the *Morning Post* prior to its premiere. Several years before the incidents portrayed, Zhang Hanguang had taken in Lin Yaqin and loaned her money on her arrival in the city of Changsha. However, instead of sending her back to school as she requests, he treats her as a kept woman, then abandons her to join his revolutionary comrades in Japan. The motivating tension of the anti-romance between this hero and this beauty lies in Zhang's demand for gratitude as Lin's benefactor versus Lin's insistence that she owes him no more affection than if she were hired for any other purpose, like a rickshaw puller: "What does it..."

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116 "Not only have I had this dream [of "hero and beauty"], in the words I have spoken onstage and written on paper I have led many people to dream with me," "不但自己做过，而且还在舞台上的语言中、报纸上的文字中引起许许多多人来陪我做梦," Chen Dabei, *Da Xie Mingxiao xiansheng lun Yinxiang yu meiren* 答谢明霄先生论「英雄与美人」[In Response to Mr. Xie Mingxiao's Comments on *The Hero and the Beauty*], *Morning Post* (October 20-21, 1921): 3, letter dated October 17. On the relative rarity with which May Fourth writers set fiction or drama during the Xinhai Revolution, see Huang Zhenlin 黄振林, *Shouqiang, cangni, nan-nü shenshi zhi mi yu wutai jiqiao zhuyi—Chen Dabei de xinju shijian yu xiandai huaju de dingli* 手枪、藏匿、男女身世之谜与舞台技巧主义—陈大悲的新剧实践与现代话剧的定位 [Guns, Concealment, Mysteries of Male-Female Experiences, and Stage Mechanics—On Chen Dabei's New Theater Practice and the Orientation of Modern Spoken Drama], *Guizhou Social Sciences* (2009: 7), 15.  

117 See Chen Dabei, "Synopsis of *The Hero and The Beauty*," 7. In the case of new plays such as this one, the synopsis or *shuoming shu* 说明书 would have compensated, if only partially, for the fact that audiences for *Jingju* and other *xiqu* forms generally knew the story a play presented beforehand.
matter whether he cares for you or not?" The transactional nature of their relationship is explicit throughout, as is Zhang's awareness and Lin's open acknowledgement from the first act that she is now in the "business of selling smiles" (maixiao shengya 卖笑生涯), a common descriptor for prostitution. Within the play there is no contrast of good to evil, since all of the central characters—Zhang, his faithful friend Wang Jianren 王建人, Lin, and Lin's lover Xiao Huanyun 萧焕云—are cast as villains, with Lin in particular embodying the strident fatalism of the play's tone. At least once in each act Lin is threatened with death, and in each case expresses that she would just as soon die as continue living.

The play's formal or intrasemiotic translation of theatrical naturalism can be seen in this vision of a new woman in the real world, where freedom from traditional mores and family structures leads to inevitable entrapment in a brutal economy of interpersonal relationships. As Lin Yaqin vividly describes her situation: "What way is there to get by other than as a living gramophone, laughing along with men, making men cry?" This figure of a living gramophone, expressed through the metonym of "a gramophone that eats," also appears in Chen Dabei's *Amateur Theater* as a way of describing actors in the old theater: "Because we are unwilling either to be living gramophones [i.e., *xiqu* actors], or to be swindlers putting our debasement on display by speaking at random [i.e., *wenmingxi* actors], theater cannot be performed without a script." The comparison of *xiqu* actors to gramophones brings to bear two features of the machine, repetition and aurality. The stylization of *xiqu* and its embodiment of repetition, Chen

119 "除了陪人笑，引人哭，当一个吃饭的留声机之外，还有什么生活的法子呢?," ibid.
argues, means that actors "have always made their apprentices into imitation machines—like gramophones—denying the souls within their bodies." The gramophone also figures how xiqu actors learned their parts by ear and were neither required nor expected to be literate, which suggests to Chen that they "did not need to understand the meaning of their lines." While the character Lin Yaqin is not necessarily a stand-in for the idea of an actor, her comparison of herself to the gramophone early in the play suggests the layering of concomitant anxieties about the interplay of speech, text, and embodiment on the aimeide stage.

*The Hero and the Beauty* opens on a rainy night, October 9, 1911, the eve of the Wuhan Uprising against Qing rule and shortly before its spread to Changsha, in the home where Lin Yaqin lives with her "false mother" (*jiamu* 假母) or proprietress, Mama Luo 罗妈. The opening scene discovers Lin, indifferent and unmoved, playing dominos to the sound of a battle taking place outside the house. Their servant reports that the city is filled with soldiers preparing for an attack by a band of revolutionaries, its gates clogged by people trying to escape to the countryside, which is in turn overrun with bandits. The set, as in a number of Chen's plays, is described as divided by a curtain down the middle into two rooms, one a bedroom decorated with inferior calligraphy and an old-style calendar, and the other a sitting room. Late at night the house is visited by Xiao Huanyun, chief investigator for the local police who provides Lin and Luo protection. Soon they are interrupted by Zhang Hanguang, with Lin shuttling Xiao into the adjoining room. Zhang accuses her of receiving him coldly, while she tries to prevent him from saying aloud that he has just returned from several years' exile in Japan (signaling that he is an anti-Qing agitator). Noticing Xiao's raincoat hanging on the wall, he declares himself woken.

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122 "不必了解词句底意义," ibid.

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from the dream of believing she cared for him. Ambiguous throughout this scene is whether Lin loathes him as much as she professes, or if she is trying to send him away before Xiao realizes who he is. The coward Xiao waits, in any case, to burst in and bluster about capturing Zhang until the revolutionary is safely away.

The second act takes place in the same setting several days later with the power relations reversed now that the revolutionaries, led by Zhang Hanguang and his friend Wang Jianren, have taken the city. Xiao, who had already expressed willingness to reverse sides as soon as it would be to his advantage, orders the others to stop calling him by his formal title. He reports to Lin that Zhang is now the most powerful man in the city, which she believes she can use to her benefit. At this moment rioting soldiers break into the house and demand the prostitutes be brought out, beating the elderly Mama Luo and threatening her at knifepoint. Xiao tries ineffectually to intercede until Zhang arrives to save the day. The quick-witted Lin tells Zhang that Xiao is her older brother, and, after dramatic declarations of how she should kill herself so he can marry an unsullied woman, the beauty and the hero reconcile.

The third act shifts to a nighttime scene in the garden of Zhang Hanguang's new military headquarters, where he has installed Lin Yaqin, Mama Luo, and Xiao Huanyun, who has now become a trusted advisor busily undermining Zhang's authority with his soldiers. Wang Jianren reveals that he is perfectly aware that Xiao looks very much like a certain former chief investigator for the Qing authorities in Changsha. Lin continues to aggravate Wang by flirting with her "brother" Xiao, but when Wang complains to Zhang, the commander refuses to see the obvious and instead accuses Wang of trying to embarrass Xiao: "What's wrong with a brother
talking to his sister? Why are you making him lose face?"123 A photograph of the Beijing Experimental Society, the only available image of this production, captures this incident staged against a painted exterior backdrop, with Shao Shangyin 邵商隐 in the role of Zhang Hanguang, costumed as the spitting image of a Westernized revolutionary intellectual, taking a lecturing stance and pointing at He Yushu 何玉书 as Wang Jianren, dressed traditionally, fists clenched and leaning back defensively, while Feng Zhimo 封至模 as Lin Yaqin and Chen himself as Xiao Huanyun stand at ease to watch the revolutionary friends argue.124 [Figure 1.7] In terms of the intersemiotic translation of these lines, the modern intellectual and his faithful friend face each other in direct opposition, revolutionary brother against brother. Meanwhile the bemusement of the faces of the two other characters reinforces for the audience, which is also in a position of superior knowledge, how Zhang is mistaken in what he is saying, that Xiao and Lin are not brother and sister at all. At the climax of this same scene Wang reprimands Zhang for having gone in one short week from a savior of the people to a corrupt leader who allows his troops to steal under cover of searching for weapons and making inspections, at which Zhang shoots him in the leg. Before being carried offstage, the injured Wang shouts, "With one revolution hardly finished, you are manufacturing a new revolution. The raw material of revolution is the evil of officials like you!"125

In the fourth act, Xiao Huanyun and Lin Yaqin flee into the countryside with Mama Luo,

124 The photograph caption in Drama 2:3 (1922) lists the actors from left-to-right as Chen Dabei (Xiao Huanyun), Feng Zhimo (Lin Yaqin), He Yushu (Wang Jianren), and Shao Shangyin (Zhang Hanguang), but if the scene corresponds to the dialogue quoted alongside the caption, as it appears to, the figure on the far left is He (Wang), while Chen (Xiao) stands at the back between Feng (Lin) and Shao (Zhang).
125 "第一次⾰命还没有完,你们就在这里制造第二次的⾰命了。制造⾰命的原料,原来是你们这些万恶的官僚！," Chen Dabei, Hero and Beauty, Act III, Morning Post (August 6, 1920): 7.
Figure 1.7

The Beijing Experimental Theater Society in Chen Dabei’s *The Hero and the Beauty*, Act III.

*Zhang Hanguang:* What’s wrong with a brother talking to his sister? Why are you making him lose face?

He Yushu as Wang Jianren, Feng Zhimo as Lin Yaqin, Chen Dabei as Xiao Huanyun, Shao Shangyin as Zhang Hanguang. From *Drama* 2:3 (1922), 1.
who carries away in a bundle the stolen money and jewels Zhang Hanguang has been accumulating. Xiao tries to relieve Luo of this expensive burden, leading to a sudden bloodbath as Xiao shoots Luo, killing her, and then Lin shoots Xiao, killing him, followed by Lin, the last character left standing, being felled by a gunshot fired from offstage by Wang Jianren, who has been following them. Local farmers enter and beg Wang at least to carry away the corpses to save them getting in trouble. Wang enlists a passing Red Cross convoy to carry the injured Lin, at her dying wish, to the court where Zhang is being tried for unspecified crimes. Improbably, Lin professes that being shot by Wang Jianren has awakened her conscience, as if reanimated by a lightning bolt: "In a flash, I felt that I have a conscience that hasn't yet died." The device of Lin living long enough for the final court scene is afforded a rational explanation in the script—the Red Cross doctor surmises she will live until eight or nine p.m. that night—but on a more imaginative level Lin appears from this point forward as a reanimated corpse, springing back to life only long enough to exculpate Zhang while showing qualities of self-doubt and self-recrimination nowhere else evident in the actions or behavior of her character. Chen Dabei's closing the play with the reversal of a guilty verdict invokes the theme of juridical redress long popular in Chinese theater, and he may even have had in mind the Yuan dynasty play The Injustice to Dou E Moves Heaven and Earth (Gan tian dong di Dou E yuan 感天动地窦娥冤) by Guan Hanqing 关汉卿 (1241–1320), in which miraculous signs at Dou E's execution for murder herald her innocence, after which her ghost appears to her father, who is also the judicial commissioner who corrects her guilty verdict.

126 "电光一闪，觉着我自己还有一个没有死透的良心，" Chen Dabei, Hero and Beauty, Act IV, Morning Post (August 8, 1920): 7.
The fifth act's court scene brings to a head the tensions between Lin Yaqin and Zhang Hanguang in an ending laden with symbolic ambiguity, especially when translated intersemiotically to the stage. While Lin appears at the trial as a witness, she is also on trial herself for the charge made repeatedly by Zhang earlier in the play, of being "an ungrateful thief" who has repaid his investment in her with indifference. In the military court she confesses to having helped Xiao Huanyun, who was illiterate, fill out a pilfered document to incriminate Zhang in betraying the revolution; the irony is that Zhang's actual theft and abuse of his authority are not on trial. When the judge questions Lin as to her relationship with Zhang, she testifies that she had lived with him at first because she feared the power of his position, desired the wealth and honor that went with it, and appreciated his kindness. Afterward, she had been forced to take a loan from Mama Luo in order to escape her "benefactor." Before dying, Lin asks for a writing brush and writes two lines. The final moments of the play overlay these written words, the court's pronounced judgement based on Lin's handwriting, and her dying words, each statement pointing in a different direction. The paper reads, "Because Liu Qinzhen [Lin's given name] could not marry freely, she fled and abandoned her family. The man she met was unkind, and she sank into—." Because the writing on the paper matches that on the stolen document, the judge orders the court officials to proclaim, "Zhang Hanguang is declared not guilty," even though the words written condemn him for his treatment of Lin.

The final fragments Lin speaks after writing the note only add to the complexity of these declarations:

Lin Yaqin: I—I—cannot be forced to love you. Please don't resent me.

129 “张汉光宣告无罪,” ibid.
But I am will—I—I—I could love you in my next life! You are my benefactor—I am grate—grate—I am will—\textsuperscript{130}

The phrases Lin leaves unfinished, "Wo gan—我感—" and "Wo yuan—我愿—," hang in the air without resolution into what she seems to try but fail to say: "I am grateful" and "I am willing." When Zhang Hanguang breaks down weeping, Wang Jianren encourages Zhang to remember only this word "willing" and to reflect, in a chilling conclusion, on Lin's final word as a replacement for the woman herself: "You are not guilty—reflect on her (points at the corpse) saying this word 'willing'."\textsuperscript{131} The act closes with the two men clasping hands, the rift between the friends seen in the picture above now sutured, although again these staged semiotics are complicated by the woman whose presence implies the opposite of what they say, in this case pointing to Zhang's guilt. Thus, at the ending of the play the open-ended nature of Lin's dying words and the text of her written note are both reduced to statements of Zhang's innocence, while her corpse is merely a witness to what she has only partly said. This reinterpretation of Lin's writing and speech takes place performatively in the judge's proclamation that Zhang is not guilty, with that pronouncement extended deictically—and intersemiotically—to his mistreatment of Lin by Wang's repetition of it while pointing at Lin's corpse.

The multiple ambiguities of this ending, described laconically by Chen Dabei in his synopsis as, "This is how the former hero and beauty exit the stage," were contested by some of the play's earliest audience members, even when they otherwise embraced the play.\textsuperscript{132} For example, after the premiere in October 1921, a student named Xie Mingxiao 谢明霄 queried

\textsuperscript{130} "我—我—不能勉强爱你。求你余怒我。我但愿—我—我来世可以爱你！你是我的恩人—我感—感—我愿—," ibid.
\textsuperscript{131} "你无罪了—请你在他（指尸）这「愿」字上着想去罢," ibid.
\textsuperscript{132} "原来英雄与美人，就是这样的下场," Chen Dabei, "Tonight's Performance," 7.
Chen Dabei in the *Morning Post* supplement about what Wang Jianren had done after Act IV with the bag of stolen property and why the playwright had not made clearer whether Zhang Hanguang cries at the end over his lover's death or out of gratitude to Wang for his friend's just criticism.\(^{133}\) Xie argues that Zhang's inarticulate weeping leaves the plot incomplete and proposes an alternative ending that shows a clear preference for a verbal articulation of what Xie takes to be the play's message: "What if Zhang, in the pauses between his sobs, speaks about how grateful he is for his friend's loyalty, how he regrets his former crimes, and how he will start over again. Wouldn't that make an even clearer, deeper impression on the minds of the audience?"\(^{134}\) Chen explained in his response that both questions show a desire for Wang to be a flawless character, when any ideal of a perfect, faultless hero or beauty is, to his mind, "an illusion turned into an idol" through reading fiction and watching *xiagu* that perpetuated such ideals. Xie's proposal for the ending, Chen writes, brought him almost to tears, just as he had to sigh after hearing that a student federation had not chosen the play for performance because its central couple did not represent the ideals of heroism and beauty, when this was precisely the author's point.\(^{135}\) "As to whether Zhang Hanguang experiences complete enlightenment before the curtain falls at the end of Act V," he concludes, "I really cannot know."\(^{136}\) The tension seen in this exchange between the nihilism of Chen's play and the idealism of the students who comprised

\(^{133}\) Xie Mingxiao 谢明霄, "Jutan: Yi feng taolun Yinxiong yu meiren juben de xin" 剧谈:一封讨论「英雄与美人」剧本的信 [Theater Discussion: A Letter on the Play The Hero and the Beauty], *Morning Post* (October 19, 1921): 3; letter dated October 12.

\(^{134}\) "倘使此时张于哽咽断续声中，说出他如何感激良友的忠实，如何懊悔从前的罪过，以后愿如何自新，似乎使观众脑里的印象更为明瞭，更为深切一点吧？", ibid. For a similar interpretation of the play that sees Zhang Hanguang as a victim of Lin Yaqin's wiles, with reference to a later production of the play by a student group in Nanjing, see Zhongying 仲英 and Xiu'an 修安 "Yinxiong yu meiren zayi" 英雄与美人杂忆 [Reminiscences of Hero and Beauty], *Nanyang Weekly* (February 2, 1923), 19.

\(^{135}\) "幻梦形成的偶像," Chen Dabei, "Response to Mr. Xie Mingxiao's Comments," 3, letter dated October 17.

\(^{136}\) "张汉光在第五幕闭幕以前有没有彻底的觉悟，我实在不能晓得," ibid.
the better part of aimeide theater's audiences and practitioners would continue into the play's staging by the People's Art Theater Training Academy in 1923.

After the Beijing Experimental Theater Society staged Hero and Beauty in December 1921 at the No. 1 Stage (Di yi wutai 第一舞台, est. 1914) at a fundraiser on behalf of victims of the Russian famine, Chen took part in another debate in the Morning Post with an audience member who was similarly enamored of the play but concerned by its message. The letter writer, who signed Dujian 独见 ("Solitary View"), argued that while he, as an educated new theater enthusiast, enjoyed Chen's dismantling of heroism and beauty as ideals, the play would be opaque for audiences trained by the old plays to expect to be told what to think.137 Dujian concludes with the hope that the Experimental Theater Society will choose plays that are positive and lead by example rather than negative cautionary tales. Chen rebutted the suggestion that the Theater Society lower their expectations of the audience, a view repeated in another letter contributed to the discussion by Yihan 一涵, who wrote that this was the first new theater play he had found satisfying and argued that audiences should have to devote at least a few minutes' thought for a play to be worthwhile.138 Like Xie Mingxiao, however, Yihan proposed an alternative ending, in this case suggesting that the fifth act be cut altogether, since in his view the plot felt complete after Wang Jianren shoots Lin Yaqin in the woods, making the resolution of

137 Dujian 独见, Jutan: Kan le Yinxiong yu meiren zhi hou 论坛/看了「英雄与美人」之后 [Theater Discussion: After Watching The Hero and the Beauty], Morning Post supplement (December 7, 1921): 3, letter dated December 5, 1921. The letter writer is possibly Ling Dujian 凌独见. For a similar argument, see Tang Xingtian 唐性天, Yinxiong yu meiren beiju de wo jian 「英雄与美人」悲剧的我见 [My View of the Tragedy The Hero and the Beauty] Morning Post supplement (July 1, 1923): 4.
138 For Chen Dabei's rebuttal, see Luntan: Rang wo lai chuopo zhe ge Xiyang jing ba 论坛/让我来戳破这个西洋景罢 [Forum: Let Me Break This Illusion], Morning Post supplement (December 9-10, 1921): 3; Yihan 一涵, "Juping: Kanguo Yinxiong yu meiren xinju de ganxiang 剧评/看过「英雄与美人」新剧的感想 [Theater Criticism: My Impressions after Watching The Hero and the Beauty], Morning Post supplement (December 10, 1921), 2-3. The letter writer is probably Gao Yihan 高一涵.
the courtroom episode too much like the reunion scene expected at the end of *xiagu* plays. Drastic though this suggestion may have been, it was in fact very nearly the revision Chen made in the 1931 edition of the play, although in this later version Wang spares Lin and the play ends happily.

In fact, Chen Dabei's complete rewriting of *Hero and Beauty* as *Fourth Zhang's Wife* toward the end of the 1920s produced a play both more recognizable in terms of later spoken drama and closer in content to a positive portrayal of the May Fourth new woman figure. At least some of these revisions reflect changes made as the play was performed, particularly at the People's Art Theater Training Academy, while others reflect suggestions made by audience members such as those discussed above. The plot transitions from tragedy to the revolution-plus-love genre popular at the time in fiction, in which the ties of affection between two central characters strengthen their commitment to the national cause.139 One of the earliest readers of *Hero and Beauty*, Xu Banmei 徐半梅 (1880–1961), had complimented Chen's playwriting for its precision and exaction: "His every sentence is surely written with deliberation, not by stringing tens of lines together in a rush. [...] If you wished to remove three or four of his words, or alter one or two of his lines, it would be difficult to set your hand to the task."140 The praise proved ironic, because Chen would undertake an experiment with the text as radical as those he made on the *aimei* stage, transforming the play not only through revisions to the plotline and character trajectories, but also by the complete rewriting of the text of *Hero and Beauty*. In tandem with

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the play's structural and thematic alterations, nearly every line of dialogue and stage direction in *Fourth Zhang's Wife* are put into different words, making the later version of the play an intralingual translation of the earlier one. The language becomes at the same time more colloquial and repetitive than in the 1920 script.

In the revision or intralingual translation published as *Fourth Zhang's Wife*, now set in an unnamed city, the central relationship of the play has been sanitized, with Lin Yaqin's relationship to Zhang Hanguang regularized as marriage, and Mama Luo now Lin Yaqin's godmother. Whereas in *Hero and Beauty* Zhang knows about Lin's occupation from the first act, in *Fourth Zhang's Wife* considerable tension arises from his refusal to recognize the clear evidence that she is having an affair with Xiao Huanyun, who has been supporting her financially in Zhang's absence. Wang Jianren's questioning of Lin's faithfulness to her husband, based on rumors about her reputation, remains suggested rather than explicit. On the other hand, here Zhang knows from an early point that Xiao is a turncoat Qing inspector and tries to utilize him despite this history, whereas in *Hero and Beauty* he willfully ignores Xiao's suspect past. The reversal of these two plot points signals the shift from Lin's anti-romance with Zhang to Lin's coming into her own as a revolutionary heroine via her romance with Zhang.

In the revised play, Chen Dabei excises the entire fifth act, the courtroom scene, of *Hero and Beauty*, as well as the second half of the fourth act in which Wang Jianren negotiates with the local farmers and the Red Cross convoy to help bring Lin and the bag of stolen goods to the court.\(^{141}\) Instead, the play ends in the countryside, where Wang Jianren spares Lin Yaqin, allowing her and Zhang Hanguang to run away together to further the revolution; for all the talk

\(^{141}\) The new fourth act takes place in Lin Yaqin's quarters at Zhang Hanguang's compound, and the fifth in the countryside outside of the city that is the setting of Act IV in *Hero and Beauty*. 96
of Lin becoming a revolutionary, in this play it is Wang, not Lin, who shoots Xiao. Chen also
adds comic relief throughout, with pratfalls and characters colliding in doorways, not to mention
an entire new character, Mama Luo's sister from the countryside. This character, Third Aunt 三
姨妈, keeps fearfully conflating the anti-Qing revolution with the Taiping Rebellion of the mid-
nineteenth century to the amusement of everyone around her, although her comparisons prove
apt as factional infighting soon breaks out among the revolution's leaders. In a similar running
gag, Luo is convinced Zhang Hanguang will name himself emperor, as had been the historical
case with the warlord Yuan Shikai 袁世凯 (1859–1916). Both humorous strains encourage a
knowing nod on the part of the audience.

The character of Lin Yaqin alters in tone and manner more so than the others in the new
context of the revolution-plus-love formula, although she continues to be devastatingly sharp-
tongued in ways that exceed the near-stereotype she becomes in Fourth Zhang's Wife. The
romance with Zhang Hanguang is by turns maudlin and saccharine, including declarations of
undying affection and lines such as "How could I be unhappy? I wanted to be your wife, and
now suddenly I am." From the play's outset she yearns to become a revolutionary and a
heroine (nü yingxiong 女英雄) but Zhang Hanguang will not allow her to take part in the
revolution because she is a woman. Rather than direct tension with Zhang, the play's central
conflict takes place between Lin and Xiao Huanyun. Lin grows furious at Xiao's easy acceptance
into Zhang's confidence, since she knows Xiao will betray him, so she tricks the coward into
running away with her in an attempt to save her husband. It takes Wang Jianren's intervention in

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142 See, for example, the episode in which Lin Yaqin points out that Xiao Huangyun has been flattering
Zhang Hanguang for his immunity to flattery, Chen Dabei, Zhang Si Taitai 张四太太 [Fourth Zhang's
143 "但是你还那样的爱我，我还是爱你," ibid., Act II.; "想做太太，居然的做着," Act III, 80.
the final act for Zhang to realize his wife "is no ordinary woman," and the curtain falls with the loyal friend seeing the couple off with the exhortation to "both be diligent in your future revolutionary work." Thus, the earlier play in which all four of the central characters are profoundly flawed evolves through revision into one in which there are two heroes, a heroine, and a single villain in Xiao, to whom all of the negative qualities in the play are attributed.

The complex and dynamic layering of spoken and written language onto the body of Lin Yaqin in Hero and Beauty reappears in altered form in the later play. Here Chen Dabei uses a less ambiguous motif of mapping signifier onto signified, matching the written word or sign onto the person (or persons) to whom it corresponds. In the first act, when Lin declares to Xiao Huanyun in jest that she is a revolutionary, he grabs her by the front of her dress to see whether she is wearing the coin that the anti-Qing agitators have been carrying to identify themselves to each other. Xiao's violating action reveals to Lin that the Qing authorities are aware of this secret token, a fact which she uses to save Zhang Hanguang and Wang Jianren. The identification itself is a straightforward one: since she is not wearing the coin that is the sign of the revolution, she is not a revolutionary.

Another incident of layering language onto body appears in the fourth act, as Lin Yaqin tries to make Zhang Hanguang realize that Xiao Huanyun has been her lover in his absence, as a means of forcing Zhang to stop entrusting Xiao with sensitive tasks at a time when the revolutionaries' hold on power is not assured. Whereas the courtroom scene of Hero and Beauty evoked the play Injustice to Dou E, this scene turns in a more literal way to the popular Jingju setpiece of The Drunken Consort (Guifei zuiji 贵妃醉酒), in which Yang Guifei 杨贵妃, consort to the Emperor Minghuang 唐明皇, dances as she descends into forlorn drunkenness. In

144 "不是一个寻常的女子," ibid., Act V, 122.
Fourth Zhang's Wife, after Zhang shoots Wang in the leg, Lin flees to her rooms, where she becomes rapidly inebriated, urging Xiao and Zhang to drink with her when they join her. Lin makes several attempts to demonstrate to Zhang what she apparently cannot bring herself to say. The first is to compare herself to Yang Guifei, one of the four legendary beauties of ancient China, Zhang to the emperor, and Xiao to An Lushan 安禄山, the rebellious general rumored to have been her lover. She continues:

I, Lin Yaqin, know I am not worthy to be named by the word [the written character] "beauty." Still, with the benefit of your love, Fourth Zhang, I have learned to identify several words, to know what is called "the nation," what are called "comrades." [...] What a pity I am a woman and cannot be a revolutionary to save the nation with you, Fourth Zhang, and fulfill my duty as a national citizen!145

Lin also asks the two men to identify what word she forms sitting in between them, berating Zhang when he fails to answer: "Look at you, with your grand degree from a foreign university, the leader of the revolutionary party! You don't even know this easiest of words to recognize!"146

The audience by this point will have recognized that the three of them are arranged as a woman, nü 女, between two men, nan 男, to look like the written character niao 嬲, "to entangle" or "to tease." The reversal from the ending of Hero and Beauty is significant: instead of Lin Yaqin's written and spoken words being reinterpreted and redirected by the men present, here neither man can see the obvious, that Lin is spelling out the character 嬲 to describe her position in a love triangle like that of Yang Guifei, An Lushan, and the emperor. Chen deploys the device of delayed revelation also seen in Hero and Beauty, but with the key difference that the ambiguities

146 “亏你是个堂堂外国毕业生，革命党们领袖！连这一个极好认的字都不认识！”, ibid., 99.
of the earlier version of the play become instead easily legible and reducible to specific meanings, at least for the audience.

A final theme that emerges in *Fourth Zhang's Wife* is that of change itself, whether a change of heart, a change of name, or a change of loyalty. Alteration as a motif appears with greatest intensity in the histrionic dialogue of the final act, when Xiao Huangyun tries to take Mama Luo's bag of stolen money from her:

*Mama Luo*: How can you be so cruel today? You've changed quickly!
*Xiao Huangyun*: Changed how? Changed!
*Mama Luo*: Before you called me your godmother. You were the one who wanted to be my son! Now you treat me cruelly! You've changed quickly!
*Xiao Huangyun*: Ha ha! You've only realized that today? Everything changes now!
Everything changes back and forth, and never stops. You say I've changed quickly, but haven't you changed? What were you like before when you called me "Master Xiao"?
What were you like after you moved into [Zhang Hanguang's] mansion and called me "Huanyun"? You know that I can change. You don't see that you can change, too!
*Lin Yaqin*: Wonderful! I agree with everything both of you say. I'd like to stand off to the side and watch you each change, one after the other.147

Lin's role as a spectator to these mutual recriminations invites Chen's audience, too, to watch the play alter when it alteration finds, as *The Hero and the Beauty* becomes *Fourth Zhang's Wife*, and *aimeide* theater becomes spoken drama.

*Hero and Beauty* in its original version was staged widely in the early 1920s, including

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147 “罗妈: 你今天为什么怎么厉害? 变得真快!
焕云: 变什么啦? 变!
罗妈: 一回儿加我干娘，自己情愿做我的儿子！一回儿就对我这样的厉害！变得真快!
焕云: 哈哈！你今天才知道吗? 如今的事就是这样的变！变来变去变一个不完。你说我变得快，你又何当没有变过？以前你叫我"萧大人"的时候，你是怎么样的？搬进公馆之后你喊我"焕云"的时候，你又是怎么样的？你就知道我会变。你就没有看见自己也会变！
productions by *aimeide* groups in, among other places, Shandong, Nanjing, and Shanghai, in addition to the three productions by the People's Art Theater Training Academy in May, August, and September of 1923, in which for the first time Lin Yaqin was played by a female actor, Wu Ruiyan 吴瑞燕 (1904–81). The exchange of letters among Chen Dabei, Dujian, and Yihan in the pages of the *Morning Post* supplement reveals elements of how the Beijing Experimental Theater Society had staged the play, although largely by negative example. Dujian's letter mixes a general critique of the play's message with enthusiastic praise, while also making a handful of suggestions to improve the production. For example, he thought the breaks between acts were too long, estimating that they must have taken a full hour of the three-hour performance, to which Chen replied the society had drilled quick scene changes in rehearsal and timed the interacts at under six minutes each. The rush between scenes was the reason why, as Dujian also complained, Chen as Xiao Huanyun had lingered too long over his lines at the opening of Act II, because the actor playing Lin Yaqin was still changing costumes. The overarching issue, of course, was how to prepare audiences for interacts at all, when action in *xiqu* was generally continuous (Yihan suggested using intermission signs). To Dujian's point that the makeup of the actor playing Lin Yaqin was garishly red, Chen counters that this mistake was due to the theater turning on the electric lights unannounced, when the stage had been lit earlier with gas lamps. Lack of communication with the theater's lighting staff had further led to the nighttime scene of Act III being played with full illumination. To the enthusiastic Dujian's distress at being unable to hear the performers, he argues that the No. 1 Stage, which was designed for *Jingju* actors used

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to projecting over a noisy audience, required the actors to scream for help instead of speaking
their lines. While Chen's tone in describing these accidents remains one of humorous despair, as
when he requests that audiences forgive and forget what had happened onstage that night, his
specific responses to Dujian all draw in language and content from the technical chapters in
*Amateur Theater*. His letter itself appears next to the serialization of the section of *Amateur
Theater* on stage lighting. Clearly, Chen uses the public forum in which this letter exchange
appeared to reinforce the ongoing interlingual-intersemiotic translation of amateur theater.

Chen Dabei's letter also complains that Dujian's account of the play might prevent future
audiences from experiencing the disillusionment *Hero and Beauty* was intended to produce:

> I am grateful that Dujian could discern how I "expose at every point the ugliness of
> heroes and beauties," but at the same time I resent his saying so much and breaking my
> illusion. He should know that the majority of those who came to see this play did so with
> the intention of admiring the elegance of the hero and the beauty. Now that you have
> broken the illusion, can we hope for those who prostrate themselves before heroism and
> beauty to pay a little cash for the common good? [i.e., contribute to charity in exchange
> for the theater ticket]¹⁴⁹

Chen's suggestion here that Dujian has defused the shock the society was trying to produce might
seem slightly disingenuous, since his synopsis also published in the *Morning Post* had made the
play's rejection of the hero and beauty ideal perfectly clear. However, the December 1921
production, like most of the performances of the Experimental Theater Society, shared billing
with, in this case, five *xiqu* performances, so the majority of the audience would have come to
see these "old plays."

¹⁴⁹ 我很感激独见先⽣能看破我那「在在暴露英雄与美人的丑态，」同时我又很抱怨他多嘴，戳
破我底西洋镜。要知道大多数来看这出戏的都是想瞻仰瞻仰「英雄」与「美人」丰采而来的。被
你这一戳破，下次还能指望教那班向「英雄」「美人」五体投地者破一点钞「共襄义举」吗? ,
Chen Dabei, "Break This Illusion," 3.
The specific image Chen deploys in this passage to describe "breaking my illusion" is that of "breaking the kinetoscope" (xiyang jing 西洋镜), literally the "Western mirror" (by extension, "lens"), a device that had "a strong metaphorical association with Western modernity."150 This Western mirror connoted a ruse or trick, most commonly in phrases such as the one Chen uses here. Within the article, the term "Western mirror" alternates with its homophonic synonym "Western scenery" (xiyang jing 西洋景), a term which appears several times in Amateur Theater. At one juncture Chen deploys the kinetoscope as a metaphor to describe the overly numerous changes of settings in wenmingxi and xiqu, such that the stage becomes like the rapidly shuffling images inside the device.151 At another, he uses it to translate a passage from Emerson Taylor's Practical Stage Directing for Amateurs in reference to the easily-broken illusion of stage interiors: "Probably the illusion of solid construction is destroyed most often, in interiors, by the obvious flimsiness of the lathe-and-canvas doors and the painted door frames."152 In answering Dujian's queries, Chen plays with these senses of mirror, scenery, and illusion, invoking the image of the stage as a mirror as well as the literal presentation of painted backdrops. Notably, he describes his account of the Experimental Theater Society's backstage obstacles as the breaking of a "greater illusion" than the illusion Dujian had broken, which was that Hero and Beauty glorified either heroism or beauty.153 This prioritization of stage praxis over and against the play's message again foregrounds Chen's interlingual-intersemiotic translation of amateur theater.

152 Emerson Taylor, Practical Stage Directing for Amateurs, 156. See Chen Dabei, Amateur Theater, 127.
153 "Enough! Since you've broken through this illusion of mine, I might as well break the entire greater illusion for everyone to have a look backstage at the No. 1 Stage," "也能！既被你戳破了我这一个西洋镜，索性把这一次在第一舞台后台的大西洋镜全本戳破了给大 家看一看吧," ibid.
Conclusion: Overwriting *Aimeide*

The impact of *Hero and Beauty* as staged first in 1921 and repeatedly over the following years should be understood in the context of other attempts to stage dialogue-based drama (or early spoken drama) at the time. Following the sharp decline in the popularity of *wenmingxi*, a number of Chinese theater artists turned to the alternative avenue of staging comparatively literal translations of Western plays, in contrast to the adaptations of translated fiction based loosely on Western sources that made up a significant portion of *wenmingxi* repertoires. Wang Zhongxian (Wang Youyou 汪优游, 1888–1937), who was, like Chen Dabei, an experienced new theater actor, spearheaded the largest-scale attempt in this direction with the staging of George Bernard Shaw's *Mrs. Warren's Profession* (1893) in the spring of 1921.154 [Figure 1.8] In Shaw's problem play the sharp-tongued and quick-witted Vivie Warren comes to realize that her education and upbringing have been financed by her mother's titular profession as a prostitute turned proprietress. Considered scandalous for its portrayal of Mrs. Warren as "not a whit a worse woman than the reputable daughter who cannot endure her," a businesswoman content with her career and outspoken in defense of it, the play was censored for its additional suggestion of possible incest in the relationship between Vivie and Frank Gardner and therefore not allowed public performance in Britain at the time when it was staged in Shanghai (it was, however,

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Figure 1.8

George Bernard Shaw's *Mrs. Warren's Profession* at Shanghai's New Stage, 1921.
performed in private theaters from 1902). In a translation by Pan Jiaxun 潘家洵 (1896–1989), *Mrs. Warren's Profession (Hualun furen zhi zhiye 华伦夫人之职业)* appeared on Shanghai's New Stage only after three months of rehearsal and an extensive advertising campaign. Disastrously, three-quarters of the audience left before the end of the play, and the production shuttered after three days. While some audience members were offended by the play's content, the predominant response was one of shock and boredom at its form. Having purchased tickets, the audience found the synthetic performance spectacle of *xiqu* replaced with "six people onstage having a plain, ordinary conversation for four-and-a-half hours."156

Histories of Chinese theater often contrast this failure to Hong Shen's successful 1924 staging of Oscar Wilde's *Lady Windemere's Fan: A Play About a Good Woman* (1893), which is considered a breakthrough event in both the staging of Western plays in translation and the formation of spoken drama.157 In between the two, however, came the influential but subsequently overlooked productions of Chen Dabei's *Hero and Beauty*, which represented a translation of Western theatrical form at two levels. First, intrasemiotically through the play itself as a tragedy in dialogue incorporating elements of theatrical naturalism as well as the well-made play and problem play formats, and, second, intersemiotically in the play's staged versions by *aimeide* troupes using the model Chen Dabei developed through interlingual translation and

155 George Bernard Shaw, "The Author's Apology" (1902), *Mrs. Warren's Profession: A Play in Four Acts* (London: Archibald Constable, 1905), xxvii-xxviii; the Apology finds Shaw's also defending the "problem play" as such: "only in the problem play is there any real drama, because drama is no mere setting up of the camera to nature: it is the presentation in parable of the conflict between Man’s will and his environment: in a word, of problem," xxii-xxiii.


157 For a recent overview of Hong Shen's production of Oscar Wilde's *Lady Windemere's Fan*, see Steven Siyuan Liu, "Hong Shen and Adaptation of Western Plays in Modern Chinese Theater," *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 27:2 (2016), 106-71.
supplementation of works on amateur theater, little theater, and independent theater movements in Europe and the United States. Wendi Chen argues of the failure of the 1921 *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, "What could be inferred from this case is the double jeopardy that the actors were confronted with, one cultural and the other technical."\(^{158}\) *Hero and Beauty* and its productions can be seen as addressing both angles: on the cultural plane, as a play set against the backdrop of recent Chinese history and speaking to current debates about the "new culture" and its personification in the "new woman," and on the technical plane, through the interlingual-intersemiotic translation that was *aimeide* theater.

Although Chen was not involved in the 1921 production of *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, he would almost certainly have read Pan Jiaxun's translation in the prominent May Fourth journal *New Tide (Xin chao 新潮)*, if not also in the original, before writing *Hero and Beauty* in 1920.\(^{159}\)

One apparent reference to Shaw's play is the note that Lin Yaqin writes before her death and its terminal dash ("The man she met was unkind, and she sank into—"), suggesting the scene in *Mrs. Warren's Profession* when Vivie Warren cannot bring herself to say out loud that her mother runs a chain of brothels:

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*Vivie:* The two infamous words that describe what my mother is are ringing in my ears and struggling on my tongue; but I can't utter them. [...] *She writes.* "Paid up capital: not less than £40,000 standing in the name of Sir George Crofts, Baronet, the chief shareholder." What comes next?—I forget. Oh yes: "Premises at Brussels, Berlin, Vienna, and Buda-Pesth. Managing director: Mrs Warren"; and now don't let us forget her qualifications: the two words. There! *She pushes the paper to them.* There! Oh, no: don't read it: don't! *She snatches it back and tears it to pieces; then seizes her head in her hands and hides her face on the table.* Frank, who has watched the writing carefully over her shoulder, and opened his eyes very widely at it, takes a card from his pocket;

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\(^{159}\) Pan Jiaxun's translation was supposed to have been published in a special issue of *New Youth* devoted to George Bernard Shaw that did not come to fruition; see Wendi Chen, "First Shaw Play," 100.
scribbles a couple of words; and silently hands it to Praed, who looks at it with amazement.\textsuperscript{160}

When Shaw's \textit{Arms and the Man} (1894) was translated into Chinese and published in \textit{Fiction Monthly} in 1935, the translation, signed Zhongxia 中暇, was given the same title as Chen's \textit{The Hero and the Beauty} (\textit{Yingxiong yu meiren} 英雄与美人), perhaps in a hat-tip, since Shaw's play, too, deconstructs ideals of heroism and femininity, albeit in a comic vein.

The Shanghai-based Theater Society of the Masses and its journal \textit{Drama} were formed out of the ashes of the 1921 production of \textit{Mrs. Warren's Profession}. While there was significant overlap between the society's aim as stated in its founding declaration to promote a non-commercial (\textit{fei-yingye} 非营业), artistic new theater (\textit{yishu de xinju} 艺术的新剧) and Chen Dabei's theorization of \textit{aimeide} theater, there were also notable differences among the views of the various members.\textsuperscript{161} Chen soon became frustrated by the society's focus on publishing articles about theater without attempting to stage productions. The Beijing Experimental Theater Society and the New China Theater Cooperative were intended to address this imbalance, although both are discussed far less in later criticism than the Theater Society of the Masses.\textsuperscript{162}

During its first year of publication, the society's journal \textit{Drama} featured numerous essays on how to improve the translation of scripts, with the idea that improved translations would prove more appealing to Chinese audiences. Chen contributed to these debates by arguing for a translation style focused on speakability, in contrast to dialogue that was "not like human speech" (\textit{bu xiang}

\textsuperscript{160} George Bernard Shaw, \textit{Mrs. Warren's Profession}, Act IV, 224.
\textsuperscript{161} See \textit{Minzhong xiju she xuanyuan} 民众戏剧社宣言 [Declaration of the Theater Society of the Masses], \textit{Drama} 1:1 (June 1921), 95. Copies of \textit{Amateur Theater} were distributed as a supplement to \textit{Drama} 1:2 (1921) while the essays were still under serialization in the \textit{Morning Post}.
\textsuperscript{162} On the founding of the Beijing Experimental Theater Society, see its manifesto and bylaws, as well as Chen Dabei's accompanying essay, \textit{Morning Post} supplement (November 26, 1921): 3.
renhua 不像人话). He argued against adopting grammatical structures from European languages or inventing words to translate unfamiliar terms, approaches many fiction translators of the day preferred, while weighing in on thorny issues such as whether there should be separate pronunciations to distinguish the female and male third person pronouns, especially in plays translated from languages with this convention. In the introduction to a 1920 translation of the British playwright John Galsworthy's 1906 Silver Box, Chen wrote that he was not opposed to literal translation (zhìyì 直译), but found existing translations of scripts to be stifling: "I always feel they can't be spoken aloud, and I've discovered many examples of speech that does not belong to humankind." In this introduction, he even imagines a dialogue between an author and a translator who ascribes to the overly literal school of translation:

Author: When I wrote [this play] I used a regional form of language that a fraction of humankind uses. How could you put it into a language never used by humankind? You think of yourself as a living dictionary, and faithful to me; in fact you have lessened my reputation.

Chen Dabei also contributed to the corpus of scripts translated in the early 1920s, including works by Galsworthy, Arthur Wing Pinero's Second Mrs. Tanqueray (1894), and Perry Boyer Corneau's one-act Masks (1922), among others. However, there is little evidence of Chen attempting to stage his own translations, while the works produced by the Beijing Experimental Theater Society and the People's Art Theater Training Academy were almost exclusively original scripts in Chinese. This preference again signals that Chen's primarily translational engagement

163 "总觉得有许多话说不上口来,而且还发现许多人类所没有的言语," Yizhe xuyan 译者叙言 [Translator's Introduction], Drama 1:1, 45, see also Chen Dabei, Amateur Theater, Chapter 2. The translation of John Galsworthy's Silver Box appeared first in the Morning Post and later in Drama.
164 "我著作时时用一部分人类所用的方言写的。你怎么把他放在人类所没有的语言中去了？你自以为做了一部活字典，就算尽忠于我；其实我底名誉被你作践够了," ibid. Chen frequently used imagined dialogue as a form of argumentation in his essays.
was at the level of theatrical form and practice, rather than at the level of content. From this perspective, we can see how recovering and reexamining the aimeide theater movement complements but also complicates the critical narrative of Chinese spoken drama developing from a performance repertoire of translated Western plays. Why, then, is the failure of *Mrs. Warren's Profession* remembered and the success of *Hero and Beauty* forgotten?

In the following years several accounts of the "new theater" and, subsequently, huaju appeared that posited Chen as the first major figure of modern Chinese drama, only to treat him and the aimeide practitioners much in the way that Chen and his colleagues had previously devalued wenmingxi: as a precursor to be rejected in the relentless logic of social Darwinism endemic to much of May Fourth cultural discourse. For example, in 1929 Xiang Peiliang 向培良 (1905–59) painted a bleak picture in looking back over prior developments in the new theater, finding that they failed to escape the influence of wenmingxi and the "old theater": "Opening the pages of the short and impoverished history of our drama, they are pitch black from beginning to end."165 Xiang goes on to issue the double-edged assessment that has stuck with Chen ever since: "If we were discussing artistic merit, then we could readily push Chen Dabei aside; but if we are discussing the course of the development of drama, and observing its arduous struggle, then this name has its corresponding place."166 In 1932 Ma Yanxiang 马彦祥 (1907–88) assessed Chen's playwriting in terms that would set the tone for most later accounts, arguing that his plays were popular only because they "conquered" (zhengfu 征服) the audience through overstimulation,

166 “假如我们要论到艺术的价值,则我们可以随便地把陈大悲拗开;但是我们若要论到戏剧发达的经过, 看她怎么样在艰苦中挣扎, 则这个名字是有相当的位置的,” ibid. 18.
thus turning their success into a negative quality. A critic writing under the penname Yi怡 argued in 1936 for rehabilitating Chen Dabei as an important huaju avant-gardist. Subsequent criticism on Chen has recapitulated these same three tendencies, arguing either that he was a pioneer who lacked artistry, that his plays were popular but only for the wrong reasons, or that he should be instituted as a founder of spoken drama.

As the narrative of spoken drama's founding solidified, Chen Dabei and the aimeide theater movement were relegated to an increasingly minor role. Hong Shen's influential essays on huaju tended to omit key contributions made by Chen, as occurs most notably when he misattributes Chen's translation-coinage aimeide to Song Chunfang 宋春舫 (1892–1938) in an essay describing the transition from the new theater to spoken drama, a mistake that Hiroshi Seto argues must have been intentional. Hong's claim that the word huaju was invented in 1928 by himself, Tian Han, and Ouyang Yuqian—the three men canonized as the founders of huaju—likewise overwrites its earlier appearance in advertisements for the People's Art Theater Training School. Some critics thus ascribe the term huaju to Chen Dabei or to Chen and Pu Boying. The question of the origin of the term huaju may be a receding horizon, given that the term

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167 Ma Yanxiang 马彦祥, Xiandai Zhongguo xiju 现代中国戏剧 [Modern Chinese Drama] (Shanghai: Xiandai shuju, 1932), excerpted in Han, Research Materials on Chen Dabei, 108-10.
168 Yi怡, Huaju xianfeng Chen Dabei 话剧先锋陈大悲 [Spoken Drama Avant-gardist Chen Dabei], Huabei Daily (August 29, 1936), excerpted in Han, Research Materials on Chen Dabei, 102-5.
169 Hong Shen, "Cong Zhongguo de xinju shuodao huaju" 从中国的新剧说道话剧 [From New Theater to Spoken Drama], foreword to Ma Yanxiang 马彦祥, Xiju gailun 戏剧概论 [Introduction to Theater] (Shanghai: Daguang shuju, 1932), 18; Hiroshi Seto, Formation of Chinese Spoken Drama, 223fn5. The confusion may also have arisen from an article Song Chunfang wrote on "Amateur Theater and Common People's Theater," dated March 27, 1922, at which point the term aimeide was already in wide circulation; reprinted in Song Chunfang, Song Chunfang lun ju 宋春舫论剧 [Song Chunfang's Views on Theater] (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1930), 47-55.
170 See Hu Ningrong 胡宁容, "Shuoshuo 'huaju' zhe ge mingcheng—jian ji cong 'aimeide' dao 'huaju'" 说说'话剧'这个名称—兼及从'爱美剧'到'话剧' [A Note on the Neologism of "Huaju"—And From "Amateur" to "Spoken Drama"], Drama: Journal of the Central Academy of Drama (March 2007), 97-8.
baihua ju 白话剧, or "theater in the vernacular," was in circulation at earlier dates. There may well have been an element of competition among these theater artists, not only between Chen and Hong, but also between Chen and Ouyang as famous dan actors in the 1910s, while Tian Han criticized Chen's plays of the 1930s as not leftist enough, another recurring theme in the secondary literature. Further, the version of spoken drama established by the late 1950s grew out of several movements to professionalize, nationalize, and standardize huaju as a specific form that proved a poor fit for aimeide experiments as well as for wenmingxi, with the aimeide theater itself retroactively overwritten with the label of early-period spoken drama. Writing about the playwright Ding Xilin 丁西林 (1893-1974), John Weinstein and Carsey Yee have suggested that the "quality texts [of amateur theater...] were eventually subsumed into the newer genre." It seems as likely that the plays retained in the repertoire were those most like huaju in its strict adherence to the mode of realism, such that plays from early Republican China that look more like symbolism, expressionism, etc., tend to be described as failures or forgotten. Chen Dabei's plays are a case in point, since the only two reprinted after the early 1920s, Ms. Youlan and Fourth Zhang's Wife, were the nearest of his plays to this style. As can be seen in Chen Dabei's work and career, aimeide theater became what he and Pu Boying hoped it would be: an avant-garde of the "main force" (zhuli jun 主力军) of the huaju that would follow.

171 On the neglect of Chen Dabei's contributions for political reasons, see for example Wu Shengwu, Chen Dabei's Theatrical Activities, passim. Chen's work for the collaborationist government of Wang Jingwei 汪精卫 (1883–1944) during the Second Sino-Japanese War drew considerable criticism.
172 Weinstein and Yee, "Translators' Introduction."
173 On Chen Dabei's Ms. Youlan, see Xiaomei Chen, Occidentalism, 144-48.
Chapter Two: Lin Huiyin's Translations of the Modern

Let's decorate this room all strange, very modern, futurist school (laughs) like in the movies where they bring the guests to relax, smoke, make conversation—or "flirt"—

这间屋子我们给打扮得怪怪的，顶摩登的，未来派的，（笑）像电影里的那样留给客人们休息，抽烟，谈心或者"作爱"— Lin Huiyin, Meizhen and Them (1937)

Introduction: Phyllis / Whei-yin

The names adopted by Lin Huiyin 林徽音/因 (1904–55) signal a life lived in translation and one that in many ways crossed borders of culture, gender, and class as well as those of language and nation. Lin was "biculturally brought up," as she put it, having attended schools in China, England, and the United States, and "there is no denying that bicultural contact and activity is essential to me."174 Lin went by Phyllis in English-language contexts, with the addition of a phonetic rendering of her given name 徽音 (pinyin: Huiyin) as "Whei-yin," which she felt would be easier for non-Chinese-speakers to pronounce. When Lin began to publish poetry, fiction, and essays in Chinese periodicals of the 1930s, she further changed her given name from Huiyin 徽音 to the homophone Huiyin 徽因 to avoid confusion with a male poet named Lin Weiyin 林薇音, while also publishing in some cases under pseudonyms. Framed within the culture industry that surrounds her today, Lin appears very much like the protagonist

of the only play she published, the unfinished *Meizhen and Them* (*Meizhen tong tamen* 梅真同 他们): an ultra-clever, superiorly talented woman surrounded by admiring men. Except that Meizhen in the play is a bond servant and Lin Huiyin was born to remarkable privilege, both in terms of social position, and also because of the ways in which her father, Lin Changmin 林长民 (1876–1925) furthered her educational opportunities as a favored daughter, including taking her to Europe on diplomatic missions. Despite Lin's status as one of the best-known women intellectuals of the May Fourth period, not all of her writing (or her work as a stage designer) has yet been attributed to her. Lin was a polymath, to put it mildly: although her published works are slim in volume, she was at the cutting edge of literary modernism, the visual arts, and architectural history. Yet she remains most famous today through her representation in the numerous biographies that have appeared since the 2000s, in addition to a 2010 state-sponsored television biopic and even an opera based on her life. In these works, Lin is presented primarily as a romantic figure associated in early life with the poet Xu Zhimo 徐志摩 (1897–1931), a mentee of Lin's father who became infatuated with her as a teenager, and later in her marriage to Liang Sicheng 梁思成 (1901–71), son of the reformist Liang Qichao, always surrounded by other men and defined by her effect on them. Lin's poetry and fiction, and her contributions to the foundational works in Chinese architectural history she co-authored with Liang, have received a certain amount of recognition; however, her significant contributions to the theater and to the transnational currents of Chinese and American theater in the 1920s and 30s have gone underexplored.175

175 The rigor of the secondary literature about Lin Huiyin varies widely. Fairbank's *Liang and Lin* and the publications of Chen Xueyong 陈学勇, especially the chronologies *Lin Huiyin nianbiao* 林徽因年表 [Lin Huiyin Chronology] and *Lin Huiyin nianbiao bu* 林徽因年表补 [Lin Huiyin Chronology Supplement],
This chapter will examine the nested stagings of Lin's career: as an intercultural performer in Beijing, as a translational figure between modern China and modern America during her studies in Philadelphia and New Haven in the 1920s, and as a bridge between the fledging academic discipline of theater in the United States and the establishment of huaju in 1930s China. In each of these settings Lin took part in what will be described as small performances of "the modern," through intersemiotic modelling of signifiers of modernity; in her scenic design and playwriting, this intersemiotic modelling contributed to the intrasemiotic translation of Western conventions of theater into huaju as a theatrical form. When her important translational roles performed through "bicultural contact and activity" are foregrounded, the larger backdrop of Lin's project in the 1920s and 1930s becomes visible: the insistence that cultural modernization could be accomplished through staging modernity in an almost literal sense by placing signifiers of "the modern" onstage, with Lin's personal self-stagings being also part and parcel of this particular form of Chinese modernism.

**Chitra in China: Crescent Moon's Intercultural Pageantry**

The 1891 play *Chitrangada* by Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1961) was performed, in its English adaptation from Bengali titled *Chitra*, at the Beijing Union Medical College on May 8, 1924, with Lin Huiyin in the title role. The occasion for the performance was a celebration of its author’s visit to China as well as the coming out party of an avant-garde group called the

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176 In contemporaneous accounts of the production the title *Chitra* was transliterated in several ways including *Qijuela* 契玦腊, *Qtetea* 齊特拉 and *Qiteluo* 契忒罗.
Crescent Moon Society (Xinyue she 新月社), "the most enthusiastic promoters of the new drama" in Beijing, who took as their name the translation into Chinese of Tagore’s self-translation into English of a book of his poetry. The 1924 Chitra production garners frequent mention in studies of modern Chinese literature and theater, especially because of the significant influence of the Crescent Moon Society on twentieth-century Chinese poetry, although without close attention to the play's text or its place within the larger setting of the evening's festivities. The society was founded around private social gatherings to rehearse plays, with Chitra being its only fully public production. While these activities were very much in the amateur spirit, it is important to keep in mind how serious and modern non-professional theater was for young intellectuals in 1920s Republican China, when it was respectable to be involved in amateur theater and to stage large-scale events such as this pageant, but not to be professionals.

The broader contexts of Tagore’s 1924 visit to China have been analyzed extensively, yet the evening’s entertainment can be productively revisited as a performance event of intercultural pageantry. To his Chinese audiences, Tagore was a multivalent literary and cultural figure: on the one hand, as a representative of India whose elevation by the West and the Anglophone literary establishment had been canonized by the 1913 Nobel Prize, and on the other, as offering a promise of pan-Asian connections that had nothing to do with the West in the form of its colonizers and authorities. Throughout Tagore’s travels in China the poet Xu Zhimo and Lin Huiyin acted as his primary interpreters, with Xu writing to Tagore hyperbolically beforehand, "I

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am supposed to interpret your speeches. But to interpret for a great poet! One might as well try to transcribe the grand roars of a Niagara or the passionate songs of a nightingale!”

A photograph showing Tagore flanked by Xu Zhimo and Lin Huiyin would become, as Michelle Yeh has noted, "one of the most iconic images of modern Chinese literature," showing Xu in traditional Chinese garb and Lin dressed in modern Western fashion with white gloves and a striking necklace. 

Despite the interpreting assistance that Xu and Lin provided throughout the visit, in the volume titled *Talks in China* published afterward it remains remarkable how often Tagore expresses frustration at having to communicate through English as lingua franca, as when he notes to the Chinese audience, "This is the history of my career. I wish I could reveal it to you more clearly through the narration of my own work in my own language," or, at another interval, "you must not hope to find anything true from my own language in translation. [...] You are trying to believe upon inadequate evidence that I am a poet. [...] I hope that this may make you want to learn Bengali some day." Tagore expressed a similar sentiment in his poem to the famous *xiqu* performer Mei Lanfang 梅兰芳 (1894–1961), who was in the audience of the May 1924 *Chitra*:

You are veiled, my beloved,  
In a language unknown to me,  
Like a hill which seems a cloud  
Behind its mask of mists.

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Figure 2.1

Rabindranath Tagore with Lin Huiyin and Xu Zhimo, 1924: "one of the most iconic images of modern Chinese literature." In reproductions of this image the fourth figure in the back is sometimes removed.
An additional irony was that Tagore had been invited to China in large part because of the popularity of his work appearing in English translation, frequently self-translation, in the early 1910s when championed by W. B. Yeats and Ezra Pound. As Xiaoqun Xu has noted, Tagore achieved world-wide fame through being "certified" by Western cultural arbiters, and "[e]qually essential is that his writings were in English or translated into English from Bengali so that Western and Chinese intellectuals were able to access them," often in ways that adapted the material to Anglo-American literary preferences, as was the case with the adaptation of *Chitrangada* into English as *Chitra*.\(^{183}\) For the Crescent Moon group in particular, Tagore was a symbol of a path to cultural modernity through reinvigorating myths and poetic traditions in the manner of Anglo-modernists. Xu and others in the Crescent Moon society wished to see themselves both in the position of Tagore's modernist Western admirers and in the position of having Tagore as one of their inspirations.

Tagore’s reflections during his visit to China often referenced the frustration of the mediation of self-translation on his part and translation through his interpreters, which developed into a crisis when he became aware that some of the translation back to him was selective.

Tagore’s public appearances in China, organized by Xu Zhimo with the support of Liang Qichao, were heralded by a slew of translations of his work and essays preparing the local audiences including a special issue of *Fiction Monthly* (*Xiaoshuo yuebao* 小说月报, 14:9) devoted to his life and work. His lectures drew large audiences but also courted controversy with detractors and

\(^{183}\) Xiaoqun Xu, *Cosmopolitanism, Nationalism, and Individualism in Modern China: The Chenbao Fukan and the New Culture Era, 1918–28* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014), 73. For an overview of the adaptations Tagore made when *Chitrangada* was translated from Bengali into English, see Christopher Balme, "Language and the Post-Colonial Stage," *Decolonizing the Stage: Theatrical Syncretism and Post-colonial Drama* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).
critics of the poet's stance rejecting Westernization-as-modernization, a position at odds with the
May Fourth Movement's embrace of "Mr. Science" and "Mr. Democracy":

We have for over a century been dragged by the prosperous West behind its chariot, choked by the dust, deafened by the noise, humbled by our own helplessness, and overwhelmed by the speed. We agreed to acknowledge that this chariot-drive was progress, and that progress was civilisation. If we ever ventured to ask, "Progress towards what, and progress for whom"—it was considered to be peculiarly and ridiculously oriental to entertain such doubts about the absoluteness of progress. Of late, a voice has come to us bidding us to take count not only of the scientific perfection of the chariot but of the depth of the ditches lying across its path.184

These sentiments drew the ire of Chinese nationalists who produced a pamphlet with a series of rebuttals reading in part, "We feel a great shame when we come into contact with modern civilization. We should improve these conditions: Man-power farming, hand manufacturing, inefficient vehicles and ships, poor printing, poor roads and lack of sanitation. We oppose Dr. Tagore so that we may reap the benefits of modern civilization."185 Tagore got hold of one of the condemnatory pamphlets distributed at his lectures, which his hosts refused to translate for him, but he eventually found another visitor to translate it and decided to cut short his time in China, noting in his farewell speech: "Some of your patriots were afraid that, carrying from India spiritual contagion, I might weaken your vigorous faith in money and materialism. I assure those who thus feel nervous that I am entirely inoffensive; I am powerless to impair their career of progress, to hold them back from rushing to the market place to sell the soul in which they do not believe."186 These clashing perspectives on how or whether to pursue modernization placed Tagore at odds with some in his audiences.

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One of the happier moments of Tagore’s visit was the widely publicized celebration of his sixty-fourth birthday held at the hall of the Beijing Union Medical College. In contrast to the foreshortened debate between Tagore's anti-Westernization position and the May Fourth agenda, the staging of the event utilized Tagore's international standing to illustrate the hopes of his hosts for an alternative modernization drawing from Eastern cultural heritages and alliances. Nested within this cultural performance, the performance of *Chitra* was meant to align the Crescent Moon society with *au courant* cultural modernism. The entire evening was staged as a lavish display of intercultural ceremonies, where Liang Qichao and Hu Shi, leading political and cultural reformers respectively, along with Tagore, spoke of the centuries of earlier cultural contacts between India and China, anticipating a new alliance of South and East Asia as a cross-cultural relationship superseding the more recent shared experience of Western imperialisms. The Chinese hosts wore Indian dress, making of the evening a symbolic return visit to India. The speeches that evening were all in English or interpreted into English, another gesture of accommodating welcome—or looked at from a different angle, a tacit acknowledgment of more recent shared colonial or semi-colonial histories and the portion of the audience who were English-speaking foreigners—and also a choice that baffled many in the audience. Tagore was bestowed by his hosts with the Chinese name Zhu Zhendan竺震旦, the surname Zhu竺 drawing from one of the names for India in Chinese, Tianzhu 天竺, and Zhendan震旦 from its historical meaning as a name for China. "Zhendan" was at the same time an inverted translation of the literal meaning of Tagore's given name Rabindra, with *Ravi* or "sun" becoming *dan旦*, "sunrise," and *Indra*, the Indian deity associated with thunderstorms, becoming *zhen震*, "thunder." When Tagore's Chinese name was reprinted on the title page of *Talks in China*, the publisher helpfully noted that Zhu Zhendan竺震旦 "may be Englished as the 'Thunder-voiced
Rising Sun of India." More prosaically, the name reads as a union of India and China and thus symbolized the hopes of the social and political reform societies sponsoring Tagore's visit. A cross-cultural relationship grounded in the exchanges that had begun more than a millennium earlier during the spread of Buddhism would, Tagore's hosts anticipated, provide an alternative vision of modernity to the recent shared history of colonialism and imperialism. In his welcome to Tagore, with Hu Shi interpreting, Liang Qichao even redrew the map of Tagore's route to Beijing, calling Tagore's enthusiastic reception across the modernized nations of Europe, the United States, and Japan the "meaningless idolatry of hero-worship" in comparison to the historical foundation of his welcome to China and the modern future it heralded.

The evening's program, which also included readings of Tagore's poems in Bengali, culminated with a tableau vivant representing the Crescent Moon society portrayed by Lin Huiyin and a child in costume "gazing enraptured at the new moon as if they were a picture in a book" to general applause, followed by the performance of Tagore's Chitra. Several of the contemporaneous accounts of the performance assert that Chitra was presented in English because there was no translation of the play in Chinese available, although in fact there were two published translations, one of which had been staged two years prior. The first translation, by Solvisto K. Wu (Wu Kang 吴康), had appeared as a bilingual facing text in The English Student:

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187 "Chu Chen-Tan," note facing half-title page, in Tagore, Talks in China, iii. See also "Zhu Zhendan dansheng yu aiqing mingju Qijuela qianwan Xiehe dalitang kongqian shenghui" 竺震旦诞生与爱情名剧契玦腊前晚协和大礼堂空前盛会 [The Birth of Zhu Zhendan and the Famous Romantic Play Chitra Performed Two Nights Ago at the Peking Memorial Auditorium in an Unprecedented Pageant], Chenbao 晨报 (May 10, 1924), 6, which contains an account of the evening's events including summaries of the speeches by Hu Shi and Liang Qichao. This article references Tagore's Chinese name as Zhongguo ming 中国名 ("Chinese name" with "Chinese" meaning nation rather than language).

188 Liang Chi Chao (Liang Qichao 梁启超), "Introduction," Tagore, Talks in China, 2.

189 "两人恋望新月宛如书图全," "Birth of Zhu Zhendan." It is not clear from the available accounts whether the tableau was meant to represent Chitrangdanda and her child from the play. This and all translations not otherwise cited are mine.

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An Aid to the Study of English, published by Commercial Press Limited in Shanghai, and might have been unknown to the participants. The other translation, however, was that of Qu Shiying 瞿世英 (1901–76), who worked closely with Xu Zhimo on organizing Tagore’s visit, and had been published in the widely read Fiction Monthly in 1921, not to mention being the subject of a critical article by Hong Zhaoyuan 洪绍原 that called for a better translation and was published in the Beijing Morning Post (Chenbao 晨报) two weeks before the Chitra production. Both Wu's translation, which appeared as an English teaching aid, and Qu’s translation approach Chitra as an English-language play, such that Tagore’s 1913 translation into English of his 1891 drama written in Bengali replaces the original. In the journal Drama (Xiju 戏剧), also in 1921, Qu had reported on the performance of his Chinese translation of Chitra by a group of women students during a benefit for victims of a drought in Hunan; here he discusses Chitra throughout as a Western play, including the topics of "the issue of translating Western plays" and "the issue of performing Western plays," which likely would have surprised the play's author. For the Crescent Moon Society's Chitra, then, the performance in English represented a choice rather than a necessity: English was the mediating language that the Chinese performers shared with Tagore, as well as a language associated with cultural prestige and modernity within semi-colonial China. The prestige was not universally conferred however, as can be seen in the review of the evening's festivities that appeared in the North China Daily Herald, one of the major

191 Rabindranath Tagore, Chitra (Qidela 齐德拉), translated by Qu Shiying 瞿世英, Xiaoshuo yuebao 小说月报 12:5 (1921), 97-110. Hong Zhaoyuan 洪绍原, "Tagore's Chitra and Qu Shiying's Qidela" (Taige'er de Chitra yu Qu Shiying de Qidela 泰戈尔的 Chitra 与瞿世英的「齐德拉」), Chenbao fukan 晨报副刊 (May 16, 1924): 4.
192 Qu Shiying 瞿世英, "After a Performance of Tagore’s Chitra" (Yanwan Taige'er de Qidela zhi hou 演完泰戈尔的齐德拉之后), Drama (Xiju 戏剧) 1:6 (1921).
English-language papers published for foreigners living in China. While generally laudatory, the review also condescends, especially in its major comments on Tagore and Lin Huiyin:

Dr. Tagore, wearing Bengalee dress, now took the stage to the sound of immense applause and explained how he came to write 'Chitra' and the motive behind it. His phrasing and his exquisite command of poetic English were delightful to listen to, his powerful thought penetrating his prose as light pours through a gauze net [...] 'Chitra' followed,—adapted for the occasion. While the Crescent Moon troupe was composed chiefly of very young amateurs, with little or no experience, the natural Chinese artistic temperament was revealed in the very remarkable colouring of the scenery, and the correctness of the dressing and posing. Miss Lin’s perfect English phrasing was noteworthy in so young a girl. 193

Here both the esteemed poet and the young actress are notable to the article’s author and even conflated largely for the quality of their spoken English, with the Chitra production as a whole complemented as naïve ("little or no experience, the natural Chinese artistic temperament") and imitative ("dressing and posing").

**Chitra in Performance**

Tagore's Chitra, the play performed that evening within the larger intercultural spectacle, revisits a narrative from the Mahabharata with four central characters: two gods, Madana (played by Xu Zhimo) and Vasanta (Lin Changmin), the titular Chitra (credited as Miss Phyllis W. H. Lin), and the hero-archer Arjuna (H. H. Chang / Zhang Xinhai 张歆海). Chitra comprises nine scenes and depends almost exclusively on recitation and reported action, with two or three speaking roles in each scene. The play opens in media res as Chitra seeks help from the gods. The only daughter of a king, she has been raised as a man—the parallels here with Lin, who played Chitra, and her father, who played Vasanta, are striking—and gained renown for

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193 “Tagore's 'Chitra' Enthusiastically Received by Peking,” *North-China Daily News* (May 15, 1924).
protecting her people, but when she falls in love with Arjuna, she does not know how to seduce him because she is too plain. The gods grant Chitra beauty for a year, yet as the year of bliss proceeds, Chitra becomes frustrated with not being loved for who she is, while Arjuna grows restless and curious about the heroic deeds of the legendary warrior-princess who he keeps hearing about from the locals. The character Chitra recaps the plot in the final revelation scene:

-Chitra: I am Chitra, the king's daughter. Perhaps you will remember the day when a woman came to you in the temple of Shiva, her body loaded with ornaments and finery. That shameless woman came to court you as though she were a man. You rejected her; you did well. My lord, I am that woman. She was my disguise. Then by the boon of gods I obtained for a year the most radiant form that a mortal ever wore, and wearied my hero's heart with the burden of that deceit. Most surely I am not that woman. I am Chitra. No goddess to be worshipped, nor yet the object of common pity to be brushed aside like a moth with indifference. If you deign to keep me by your side in the path of danger and daring, if you allow me to share the great duties of your life, then you will know my true self.  

The cross-dressing of Chitra in the play was underscored in the English edition published by the India Society of London (1913), which included a note discussing its performance and adaptation to script form, "The dramatic poem 'Chitra' has been performed in India without scenery—the actors being surrounded by the audience. Proposals for its production here having been made to him [presumably Tagore], he went through this translation and provided stage directions, but wished these omitted if it were printed as a book."  

Christopher Balme has suggested that this shows how Tagore was "very conscious that translation for the stage implies reworking not just the language but stage conventions as well." In the printed book, the stage directions are

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194 Rabindranath Tagore, *Chitra: A Play in One Act* (London: India Society, 1913), 34.
195 Ibid., prefatory note.
196 Christopher Balme, *Decolonizing the Stage: Theatrical Syncretism and Post-colonial Drama*, 141.
limited to a few "enters" and "exeunts," except for when it comes to Chitra's transitions: "Scene II: Enter Chitra, dressed as a woman […] Scene IX: cloaked […] unveiling in her original male attire" as Chitra appears dressed first as a man, then as a woman, then finally as a man.197 The contemporaneous accounts of the Crescent Moon Chitra do not address whether Lin Huiyin changed costumes in the role, but the audience both at the performance and who followed the enthusiastic news reports were struck by the novelty of Chitra’s cast, with women and men together onstage along with the venerable Lin Changmin, both unusual in the context of early 1920s China. It was only the previous year that Hong Shen had made the attempt to bring what he called a "natural death" to the practice of men performing female roles, and Chen Dabei’s People’s Art Theater Training Academy had been producing plays with integrated male and female casts, but this was not yet normative. Perhaps Lin Huiyin’s performance was sanctioned because it took place with her father also in the cast: the account published two days later in Chenbao referred to this as "father and daughter acting together" (fu nü heyàn 父女合演), a play on the phrase "men and women acting together" (nan nü heyàn 男女合演) and described it as "unprecedented (kongqian) 空前, repeating the same term used to describe the entire evening's festivities in the article's title as "An Unprecedented Pageant" (kongqian shenghui 空前盛会).198

Reflecting on his hastened departure from China, Tagore quite remarkably compared his own position as a courted but heavily mediated guest to that of the protagonist of the play Chitra:

I thought that I was receiving your attention almost under a false personation. I was reminded of the woman Chitra in my play who had the boon of beauty given to her by the God of Love. When through this divine illusion she succeeded in winning her lover's

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197 Tagore, Chitra, 8 and 33.
heart, she rebelled against this beauty, crying that all the caresses which her heart craved from her lover were intercepted by this disguise.  

The role of globally renowned cultural ambassador was an uneasy one, especially through the layers of translation that Tagore felt to distance his message from his listeners. The Crescent Moon *Chitra* similarly proceeded at several removes from its audience, raising the question of who ultimately this performance was for: for Tagore, as an audience of one; for the local Chinese audience, many of whom would not have followed the English text in performance; for the foreign attendees like the author of the *North China* review; for those "biculturally brought up" like Lin Huiyin; or for an imagined audience? 

Shu-mei Shih has written about semicolonial modernism in China as largely a projected response to an imagined cosmopolitan modernity in what was primarily a one-sided conversation; "gesticulating energetically without really getting seen or heard." This gesticulating, this dialogue, was a performance in the same sense as the broader performance of the intercultural pageant on the occasion of Tagore's visit and the embedded performance of *Chitra*. The evening's hosts staged an alternative to modernization via imitation of the West through positing a cultural and social renewal of the historical Sino-Indian cross-cultural exchanges. Lin’s appearance as Chitra in China was a translational performance of a global cultural modernity, one that traversed, almost glibly, boundaries of nation, class, gender, and language, in a play translated interlingually and produced cross-culturally as a recuperation of myth into a modern setting, against the intercultural backdrop of the evening’s staged visit to India. What better example of the complexities and anxieties attendant upon the evening’s

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posing of an alternative modernity than the Chitra performance and surrounding pageant, each participant becoming a cultural representative, taking on some of the semiotics of the other, from Tagore’s Chinese name to the Indian dress of the hosts to the young Chinese woman with the perfect English playing the Indian heroine as a man and as a woman.

Lin's American Stage: "Leader of Modernists"

Within a few weeks of the 1924 Chitra performance in Beijing, Lin Huiyin travelled to study in the United States, where she completed an undergraduate degree at the University of Pennsylvania and then enrolled in the newly established graduate program in stage design at the Yale School of Drama (YSD). Lin and her fiancé Liang Sicheng arrived at Penn both intending to study architecture, only to find that the Architectural School was not open to women.²⁰¹ Lin enrolled instead in the university's School of Fine Arts and took most of the same classes as the male students in architecture, accelerating through her studies and graduating in February 1927.²⁰² After their return to China in 1928, Liang and Lin together founded the study of historical architecture in China, with their discoveries of ancient buildings, Liang's scholarly publications in this area, and the couple's preservation efforts earning them near-mythological status as cultural figures. While Lin's time at Penn is well documented, her studies at the YSD, ²⁰¹ Liang, like Lin, came from an eminent family background as the son of reformer Liang Qichao, also a close friend of Lin's father Lin Changmin. According to Ling and Liang's biographers, their marriage was both arranged and volitional: their fathers arranged the match in 1919 but allowed their children, then both in their teens, to decide whether they would marry. Lin and Liang formalized their engagement by 1923 and married in 1928 in Canada during their return travels to China. ²⁰² For the fullest account of Lin's studies and student life at the University of Pennsylvania, see Sidney Wong, "Research Notes: Lin Huiyin (林徽因) and Liang Sicheng (梁思成) as Architectural Students at the University of Pennsylvania (1924-27)," Planning and Development 23:1 (2008), passim.
which had accepted its first class in 1924, present a lacuna in her biographies.\(^\text{203}\) Her active role in the broader cross-cultural theatrical movements of the day can be reexamined, however, through the profiles of Lin that appeared in both English and Chinese newspapers, which themselves illustrate Lin's highly effective self-staging as a mediating figure between China and America and as a symbol of the most successful possibilities of merging tradition and modernity. The reflexivity found in self-translation and performance of the self that is consciously "bicultural," as Lin described it, can be seen throughout these publications about Lin as well as in her later writing practice: the bicultural position for Lin meant mediating, or interpreting, in both directions in situations where the translator is not only highly visible, but also included as part of the signification.

Lin's studies in the United States, like those of many of her peers, were supported by Boxer Indemnity funds disbursed as scholarships starting in 1908 out of the reparations that had been demanded by the allied Western armies from the Qing government after the suppression of the Boxer Rebellion. Most elected to study in fields where the knowledge gained would allow them to make immediate contributions to China's modernization on their return, as was the intent behind Liang Sicheng and Lin Huiyin planning to study architecture. Under the permanent extension of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act that prevented immigration or naturalization, not lifted until the 1940s, the return of these students to China was not largely in question. At the time Lin began her studies at Penn, there were some 1,600 Chinese students at United States

\(^{203}\) One contributing factor, in addition to Lin's comparatively short time at Yale, is that while the University of Pennsylvania has made many of the records of Lin's studies public or available to scholars, the archive at Yale University, RU 728: Yale School of Drama Records: Series VIII: Student records is restricted until 2042. Research I undertook in summer 2018 into the RU 728 holdings available for viewing, DRA 37: Yale Repertory Theatre and Yale School of Drama Ephemera Collection, and RU 397: Yale School of Drama Photographs and Posters, did not bring to light additional material on Lin specifically, although archival production records on YSD productions of the plays of John Wong-Quincey are used in Chapter Three.
institutions of higher learning, and Weili Ye has argued that this generation, while not the first to study abroad in modernized nations, "were among the first for whom 'modernity' became a lived experience," one that would inform a uniquely Chinese modernity that "by its very nature involves cross-cultural interchange."\(^{204}\) The foreign students in the United States developed a significant nation-wide community while abroad, with regional and national Chinese student association conferences and a monthly English-language gazette that reported on student activities, including many theatrical ones.\(^ {205}\) A subset of students in the 1920s, following the path of Hong Shen's studies in George Pierce Baker's 47 Workshop in playwriting at Harvard University, decided to devote their studies to theater with the aim of modernizing Chinese drama. These theater artists, including Lin Huiyin and John Wong-Quincey (the subject of Chapter Three), in addition to the better-known group associated with Yu Shangyuan 余上沅 (1897–1970), Xiong Foxi 熊佛西 (1900–65), and Wen Yiduo 闻一多 (1899–1946), like Hong Shen before them, were faced with the challenge of interpreting in both directions, with the impetus on the one hand to transmit the most modern developments in American theater to a Chinese public, and on the other to represent modern Chinese culture to an American public.

Lin addressed this challenge through self-presentations and self-stagings that were both more public and more personal than those of her male colleagues, acting as a cross-cultural translator in an ongoing performance of "bicultural" identity. Shu-mei Shih has argued in her study of Lin's 1930s fiction that this identity was part of a bicultural liminality: "a notion of


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culture which vigilantly situates itself in the global context beyond nationalist paradigms, but this globalization does not conform to the rules of cultural homogenization imposed by the colonial structures of knowledge and culture."\textsuperscript{206} Following on the *Chitra* performance and her role as an interpreter during Tagore's visit to China, when Lin went abroad to study in the mid-1920s she did so accompanied by significant publicity in both cultures from the position of interpreting one culture to the other. These articles would be typical society paper fare, except that Lin turned each to focalize on the national mission that combined her interests in architecture and theater.

Shortly after Lin's departure for the United States, an article titled "Ms. Lin Huiyin" was published in the *Pictorial Weekly of the Eastern Times (Tuhua shibao 图画时报)*.\textsuperscript{207} The left half of the article is devoted to the *Chitra* production, including the only known picture from the play of Lin Huiyin in costume. [Figure 2.2] The right half discusses her background and plans for studying in the United States, complimenting Lin's beauty, reputation, excellence in both English and Chinese, and aesthetic sense, and notes that when she is at leisure she enjoys decorating her home, an engagement with Aestheticism in keeping with her translation of Oscar Wilde at the time.\textsuperscript{208} The author notes that Lin plans to major in architectural design, with special attention to stage design. The linking of architecture and stage design continues in the description of Philadelphia, where Lin would be studying:

> The city has been produced by Europe and American experts of all nations. The theaters and buildings are examples not only of solid engineering, but also of magnificent

\textsuperscript{206} Shih, *Lure of the Modern*, 211.

\textsuperscript{207} "Lin Huiyin nüshi" 林徽音女士 [Ms. Lin Huiyin], *Tuhua shibao* 图画时报 [*The Pictorial Weekly of the Eastern Times*] (September 20, 1925).

\textsuperscript{208} The volume of Lin Huiyin's published interlingual translations is relatively limited, and only her translation of Oscar Wilde's story "The Nightingale and the Rose" has been widely anthologized; it is likely that she published additional uncredited translations. See Lin Huiyin 林徽因, trans., "*Yeying yu meigui*" 夜莺与玫瑰 [#The Nightingale and the Rose#], *Lin Huiyin quanji* 林徽因全集 [*Complete Works of Lin Huiyin*] (Beijing: New World Press, 2012), 2-11.
Figure 2.2

embellishments for which they are famous. [...] These truly are a world away from our nation's theaters and shouldn't be mentioned in the same breath. In the future when Ms. [Lin Huiyin] completes her studies and returns, she will be able to contribute to the people of her nation.209

During Lin's undergraduate studies, she was also profiled in several American papers, including a news bulletin noting, "A Chinese girl, Phyllis Lin, is studying architecture in the School of Fine Arts, University of Pennsylvania. Miss Lin, though but 19, was the first woman in China to act in a play with men taking parts at the same time."210 The most extensive article ran in the Philadelphia Public Ledger and North American in October 1925 under the title, "Finds Foreigners Spoil Chinese Art. Girl Student at U. of P. Says Strange Types of Modern Houses Fill Cities. Active in Modern Group" (when reprinted as a national news item, "Leader of the Modernists"). [Figure 2.3] The article shifts between applauding Lin's achievements both scholastically and as "a leader in the group of educated modernists that is directing the trend of Chinese thought today" while also emphasizing Lin's girlishness and quizzing her on her view of American flappers.211 Lin's interview shows a careful attention to staging in explaining her aesthetic plans for the nation:

"Picture this." She leaned back to observe the effect of her words. "A Chinese house, a classic pillar nailed on here and there. French windows, an American Colonial doorway and a multitude of unnecessary English, German, Italian and Spanish details of ornament. [...] We are distressed to see our native and peculiarly original art being exploited through this wild craze for 'keeping up with the world.' [...] There is a movement—not bandits, not rebellion—to show to the students and people of China, western attainments

209 "诚以欧美诸邦专才辈出，剧场建筑不独以工程坚固，陈设华丽见称。 [...] 以视我国剧场，洵有天渊之别，不可同日语也。将来女士学成归来，必可以贡献于国人者."
211 "Finds Foreigners Spoil Chinese Art. Girl Student at U. of P. Says Strange Types of Modern Houses Fill Cities. Active in Modern Group," Philadelphia Public Ledger and North American (October 18, 1925). Secondary sources on Lin Huiyin, including Fairbanks, Shih, and Wong, cite this article to the version that appeared in the Billings Gazette, but it appeared first in the local Philadelphia paper.
Figure 2.3

Article on Lin Huiyin's studies at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia Public Ledger and North American, October 18, 1925.
in art, in literature, in music, in drama. But not to take the place of our own! Never. We
must learn the fundamental principles of all art only in order to apply them to designs
distinctly ours.\footnote{Ibid.}

When Lin was on the way back to China in 1928, it was also to considerable fanfare about her
preparation to contribute to Chinese theater in repurposed articles nominally about her marriage
to Liang Sicheng and their honeymoon across Europe. The renamed \textit{Eastern Times Photo}
\textit{Supplement} this time included articles in both English and Chinese discussing Lin's
accomplishments, including that Lin had studied

not only the art of expression but also has a great profeciency [sic] in stage direction and
designing of scenery. During her honeymoon which she is now taking with her husband,
Mr. S. C. Liang, she is making an exhaustive study of the architecture of the different
countries of Europe, which knowledge will be used in stage effects. It seems a co-
incidence that Mrs. Liang a dramatist is making this study in the centennial year of
Ibsen.\footnote{"Liang Sicheng furen Lin Huiyin nüshi" 梁思成夫人林徽音女士, [Liang Sicheng's Wife Ms. Lin
Huiyin], \textit{Tuhua shibao} 图画时报 / \textit{The Eastern Times Photo Supplement} (May 13, 1928), page 0.}

The Sunday picture section of \textit{Chenbao} devoted a two-page spread to an article about Lin that
included an interview that turned into a commentary on her theater studies. "Theater is the
mother of all arts. The performing arts of each nation in Europe and America have been
advancing by leaps and bounds, while ours seems to be looking backward," the article's author Li
Zhaoshi 李昭实 opens.\footnote{"戏剧者，艺术之母也。欧美各国演艺界突飞猛进，一日千里，我国瞠乎其后," Li Zhaoshi 李昭实,
article on Lin Huiyin, \textit{Chenbao xingqi huabao} 晨报星期画 / \textit{The Morning Post Sunday Picture
Section}, no. 133 (September 6, 1928): 1.} She then quotes Lin's current views on theater:

Modern theater is divided into three camps: the newest is called Constructionism [i.e.,
Constructivism], which is current in the Russian capital. Before that there was
Expressionism, which has very simple settings that with lines and colors, added in layers,
allow the real scene to suddenly be revealed, and move the people watching the play so

\begin{figure}[h]
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Figure 2.4

Article on Lin Huiyin and Liang Sicheng's return to China, including Lin's interview about theater. The center photograph is of Lin. *The Morning Post Sunday Picture Section (Chenbao xingqi huabao 晨报星期画报)*, September 6, 1928.
that they have realization without words. Using only different kinds of symbols its works express the range of emotions, from joy and rage to grief and pleasure. For example, grief can be seen from the performer's movements, without showing them beating their chests and weeping. This style today could also be called new. The earliest one is Realism, in which the role of the setting is broader, the number of actors is greater—in addition to the central roles, countless supporting roles are added—all to make the scene wonderfully true to life.215

In each of these instances, Lin harnessed the format of a journalistic profile of a talented socialite, student, or newlywed as a lecture forum, with theater, especially theater architecture and settings, as the throughline. Speaking to an American audience Lin emphasizes forging aesthetics and architecture into a uniquely Chinese modernity, producing "designs distinctly ours" from "fundamental principles of all art." To her Chinese audience, she uses the interview to provide shorthand coverage of American and European developments in theater drawn from her studies at the YSD. Taken together these self-presentations show Lin's creation of a public image across two cultures and translating parts of each to the other, building on the slight notoriety occasioned by the Chitra performance.

Even though the YSD had only started accepting students three years earlier, Lin Huiyin was not the first person from China to study there in 1927, and she may well have chosen the school on the basis of its high-profile production of Peking Politics, a play written by John Wong-Quincey, in May of that year. She was, however, the first to pursue the specialization in stage design that was offered alongside the playwriting specialization; there was at this period no

215 “现代戏剧分三派, 最新者曰构成派 (Constructionism), 今俄京方盛行。前于构成派者曰表现派 (Expressionism), 其·布景甚简单, 乃就线痕或色彩, 累加渲染, 使真景豁然流露, 而观剧者目之所触, 能相悟于不言中。其做工仅以种种象征, 显出喜怒哀乐之情。如哀感可就演剧者之动作见之, 不必现其拊膺大哭也。此类作风, 在今日亦可谓之新。其最早之一种, 乃写实派 (Realism), 布景之地位宜宽, 演剧人宜多, 主角而外, 并宜加入无数配角, 使其情景妙肖逼真,” ibid.
formal acting training program at the school. In contrast to her experience at Penn, the YSD was from its inception co-educational and open to students based on experience rather than formal academic qualifications. The at-times heated correspondence among George Pierce Baker, who moved from Harvard to found the YSD, Everett Victor Meeks, Dean of the School of Fine Arts, and Professor Robert N. Corvin, Chairman, Board of Admissions, illustrates that these admissions profiles were a significant point of contention given that the graduate program was meant originally to be a complement to the long-standing Yale Dramatic Association whose membership was restricted to the school's elite male undergraduates.\footnote{George Pierce Baker Correspondence 1924-28, YRG 22-B Series I, Box 5 Folder 42, Records of the Yale School of Drama, University Library, Yale Archives.} The drama program with its practical emphasis on professional-level productions was novel enough to garner significant publicity, including an article published in the Bridgeport Morning Post while Lin was a student: "Mr. Baker's object is to train artists, both writers and producers, and to train them so that they will not only be artists, but also highly practical men and women of the theatre. Therefore, he who writes plays at Yale also works on the production-crews—paint, light, costume, prop or carpenter-crew—taking his turn at each of them."\footnote{"Many Bridgeporters Interested in Opening Bill of Yale Dramatic Workshop," Bridgeport Sunday Post (November 6, 1927).} Scenic designer Donald Oenslager (1902–75), whose work was influenced by Edward Gordon Craig (1872–1966) and Adolphe Appia (1862–1928), was the primary instructor in scenic design and would have taught the required sequence in Drama 12a: History of Stage Design ("The history of the physical features of the stage from its origins to the present day, emphasizing the Greek, roman, Mediaeval, Renaissance and Eighteenth Century periods.") and 12b ("Practice and theory of stage design to develop a thorough understanding of elementary problems of design (tone relations, composition,
perspective, etc., as applied to stage decoration)," both classes that Lin would likely have taken.\footnote{List of courses in Drama, George Pierce Baker Correspondence 1925-50, YRG 22-B Series I, Box 5 Folder 43, Records of the Yale School of Drama, University Library, Yale Archives.}

In her posthumous joint biography of Lin and Liang Sicheng, Wilma Fairbank writes that Lin "made a special place for herself in the circle of aspiring stage designers" at the YSD.\footnote{Fairbank, Liang and Lin, 30. This biography, like the others consulted, includes slight discussion of Lin's time at the YSD. [Research note: The Fairbank family has given me permission in the future to view Lin's surviving correspondence with Fairbank, archived at the Phillips Library of the Peabody Essex Museum, to see if that correspondence touches on topics relevant to this chapter.]} By early 1928 Lin had advanced to the point of designing a set for one of the internal school productions, a production of a student playwright's work for an invited audience. Famously, the price of entry to these internal productions was to submit written feedback on all aspects of the play to George Pierce Baker. Works that proved successful in this format might be selected for short run public productions, as was the case with Katherine Clugston's comedy \textit{Finished}, a risqué satire of a stuffy finishing school and its hapless, fractious students staged internally in February of that year. A surviving audience critique noted, "The setting was very good for every scene—one may be pardoned for saying it was exquisite, conceived and carried out with that fine restraint as well as sense of values and perfect mastery of technique, which is a sheer artistic joy to those who look on."\footnote{\textit{Finished} program critique, Productions and Program Critiques 1929-30, YRG 22-B Series VII, Box 69 Folder 172, Records of the Yale School of Drama, University Library, Yale Archives. Surprisingly few of the audience commentaries are available in the Baker papers housed at the Harvard Houghton Library or at the Yale School of Drama.} The set Lin designed for the third scene, which shows the headmistress's office at a dysfunctional finishing school, was chosen over the two sets each designed by Frank P. Bevan and Frederick Stover in the advertising for the public performance that followed. [Figure 2.5] Scene III of \textit{Finished} calls for the headmistress Miss VanAlstyne's "sanctum sanctorum, in her exclusive finishing school"; the script calls in addition for there to be
Figure 2.5

"The Woodshed door [...] upstage right, and down right is the door which leads into the front hall. In the rear wall there is a window, and up right a secretary's desk. Upstage center and down left are two chairs. Miss VanAlstyne's desk, the main feature of the room, is a little left of center stage, and is placed facing downstage right. Her throne chair is behind it and there is another and smaller chair upstage." 221 The production photograph preserves the climax of the third act when two young men break into the school and demand to see the student one of them impulsively proposed to on their first meeting in a Pullman train car over the holidays. The setting allows for all ten characters onstage to form multiple tableaus in distinct spaces at different depths, without crowding the space or blocking sight lines. The three-dimensionality of the stage design is reminiscent of the small number of Lin's set designs in China from the 1930s preserved in newspaper photographs.

After a highly successful production in New Haven, Finished would go on to a professional run on Broadway at Cort Theatre (retitled These Days, 1928), was adapted as a film (Finishing School, 1934), and selected as one of the first four YSD plays that George Pierce Baker would publish as a series with Samuel French, "as plays behind which the Department [of Drama] is ready to stand [...] It is hoped that the photographs of settings will make them easier to produce." 222 In this way, through the articles and this set design, Lin was able within her short career in the United States to make a continuing if minor contribution to American theater. In February 1928 Liang Sicheng finished his advanced study in architecture at Harvard and persuaded Lin to leave before graduating so that they could marry (the Liang family preemptively held a ceremony at home, and the legal wedding took place on March 31 in

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221 Katherine Clugston, Finished: A Comedy in Five Scenes, Samuel French (1931).
222 George P. Baker, foreword to Clugston, Finished, v. These Days was Katherine Hepburn's first Broadway role, as Veronica Sims.
Canada) before returning to China, such that Lin would leave the school before the production that took place March 15 and 16, 1928. That Lin would miss the public presentation of her work, in a situation that paralleled the scenario of the play she had just finished designing the setting for, indicates the tension between her family and professional aspirations that would continue throughout her theatrical activities in the next decades.

Students from China studying theater in the United States in the 1920s were concerned primarily with modernizing Chinese theater, although theater activities also "enabled Chinese students in America to explore and express their feelings and concerns, and to communicate with the American audience."\(^\text{223}\) This mission was foremost in Lin Huiyin's mind on her return to China, as evidenced in the newspaper articles discussed above, and in the reminiscence of an American couple who met Liang and Lin on their return journey: "Phyllis [Lin] was passionate, forceful, dramatic, and quite funny: mad at Mei Lan Fang because he dared not sit down in her presence, joyous at the prospect of bringing traditional theater into the rhythm of the 20th century."\(^\text{224}\) Lin's contributions as a returning student in the 1930s included publishing articles on theater, designing sets for several major productions, and publishing the first three acts of an unfinished play, yet she is barely mentioned in theater histories other than being listed as one of the founding members of the Chinese Drama Reform Society, and even then the full extent of her contributions to the transnational movements of theater between American and China is overlooked.

In early 1925, a group of Chinese students in the United States formed the Chinese Drama Reform Society (Zhonghua xiju gaijin she 华戏剧改进社), announced by the

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\(^{224}\) Quoted in Fairbank, *Liang and Lin*, 36.
publication of a letter from Xiong Foxi, who was studying at Columbia, to Wang Jiansan 王剑三 in the Morning Post arts and culture supplement. In Xiong's announcement, the immediate impetus for the society was the Crescent Moon Society's Chitra production in Beijing, with Lin as the intermediator: "Last winter Ms. Lin [Huiyin] came to New York and happily brought up their triumph. I don’t care whether it was an artistic success or failure. I believe that without knowing it they have given the general Chinese audience a crucial suggestion: [...] Making plays is not a degrading activity, it is synthesizing all of art and thought and displaying them onstage." While noting that unfortunately he was not in Beijing at the time to attend the event, Xiong finds the importance of the Chitra production to be primarily in demonstrating to broader Chinese audiences that theater was a worthwhile enterprise and an indication of China's modernization. The success of Chitra in establishing theater as a serious art then provided the impetus for the society: "Now that there has been such an achievement, we can see a way forward for Chinese theater, if all of us concentrate our efforts to make it happen." Yu Shangyuan would also link the Reform Society and the related National Theater movement to productions these students had recently staged in New York in English of classical theater stories including The Cowherd and the Weaving Maid, The Lute, and Yang Guifei. The original members of the society Xiong lists in addition to himself were Lin Huiyin, Liang Sicheng, Wen Yiduo, Yu Shangyuan, Qu Shiyi [who had translated Chitra into Chinese], Zhang Jiazhu 张嘉铸, Zhao Ji 赵畸 [Zhao Taimou 赵太侔], and Liang Shiqiu 梁实秋 [a translator of Shakespeare].

225 "去年冬天林女士到纽约来还很高兴的提起他们那次的胜利。我不管他们在艺术本身上的成功或失败，我以为他们曾经不知不觉的给了中国一般普通观众一个很紧要[...] 的暗示，" Xiong Foxi 熊佛西 and Wang Jiansan 王剑三, "Zhonghua xiju gaijinshe de xin xiaoxi" 中华戏剧改进社的新消息 [News from the Society for the Improvement of Chinese Theater], Chenbao fujuan 晨报副镌 (April 2, 1925).
226 "过去的成绩既然是如此，中华戏剧的前途更是可观，假如我们大家能同心合力的干去，" ibid.
into Chinese], and were all men except for Lin. As its first order of business, the society dispatched to Beijing "as the first line of attack" ("先做冲锋工作") in the remolding of national theater three of its members, Yu Shangyuan and Zhao Taimou, who had studied theater at Carnegie Tech and Columbia, and Wen Yidou, who had been studying painting, and in the bulk of the letter Xiong, who was already an established theater figure, provided an introduction and bona fides for them. Wang Jiansan's letter in response, also published in the Chenbao supplement, expressed enthusiasm for this "avant-garde" (先锋队): "The duty of the avant-garde this time truly is to 'open roads across the mountains and build bridges over the rivers,' in anticipation of our ideal new theater."227

Yu, Zhao, and Wen sought to begin a National Theater Movement in Beijing that, while unsuccessful, has been considered an important moment in twentieth century Chinese theater. This movement was an attempt, as discussed by Siyuan Liu, "to reinsert indigenous performance [meaning xiqu] into modern spoken theatre known as huaju (spoken drama) that had, since the late 1910s, rejected 'old theatre' as primitive and inartistic entertainment" at the time when modernity was overtaking China.228 The National Theater Movement saw itself in parallel to the Irish National Theater (Yu and Wen liked to describe themselves as the Yeats and Synge of China), and tried to counter the dominance of Ibsen as a model for modern theater with newer trends in American and European theater: "Their emphasis on the modernist rejection of the romantic and realist, combined with the focus on formal purity, positioned the National Theatre proponents far from cultural conservatives and near to Euro-American theatrical radicals seeking

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227 "这一回的先锋队却真有“逢山开路遇水搭桥”的责任，以期望我们理想中的新剧出现," ibid.
to break the outmoded vision of socio-critical theatre by attacking the older generation."\textsuperscript{229}

Accounts of the National Theater Movement have largely followed Yu Shangyuan's contemporaneous articles and retrospective account, while Liu's recent scholarship has enriched this account with lesser-known writings by Yu and by students at the theater department Yu and Wen briefly oversaw who rejected the premise of bringing elements of \textit{xiqu} into \textit{huaju}. While Liu does not connect the short-lived National Theater Movement to the Crescent Moon \textit{Chitra} production, Constantine Tung and Peng Yaochun, among others, have shown these narrower efforts of Yu and Zhao to be part of a broader movement continuous with the Crescent School into the 1930s: "The suggested adoption of elements of the traditional theater into the new national drama of China was not a return by the Crescentists to the traditional values and standards of aestheticism; rather, the Crescentists attempted to assimilate the traditional dramaturgy in their creation of a new drama. Their concern for artistry was above their interest in preserving a tradition."\textsuperscript{230} In contrast to the short-lived National Theater Movement, Peng Yaochun in particular describes a more lasting influence of the Reform Society into the 1930s as a conduit for modern theater practice and aesthetics between the United States and modern Chinese theater.\textsuperscript{231} This trajectory and the continuation of the Crescent School's impetus becomes even more visible when Lin Huiyin's contributions to theater in the 1930s are taken into account.

\textsuperscript{229} Liu, "Cross Currents of Modern Theatre," 27.
\textsuperscript{230} Tung, "Crescent Moon and Modern Chinese Drama," 1990, 15.
\textsuperscript{231} See Peng Yaochun 彭耀春, "Xiju, Xinyue pai zuhe de qiji" 戏剧，新月派组合的契机 [Drama, A Turning Point for the Crescent Moon School's Formation], \textit{Journal of Hangzhou University} 杭州大学学报 20:4 (1990).
Lin's First Act in Beijing: Domestic Settings

When Lin Huiyin returned to China in 1928, the original "avant-garde" theater group associated with the National Theater movement had dispersed, although the members of the Chinese Drama Reform Society almost all continued to be active in staging small-scale theater productions. From Lin's biographies and the scholarship on her writing across the 1930s, it might appear that she abandoned her highly public ambition to contribute to Chinese theater in favor of her work in architecture, design, and fiction, aside from the unfinished 1937 play *Meizhen and Them*. Lin continued however to be active in theater through several interventions in addition to her own playwriting and set design: these included published essays as part of a debate over the principles of stage design and an article on playwriting, both discussed below. Nonetheless, her circumstances had changed significantly, and as Fairbanks discusses, Lin was "a member of the transitional generation, in rebellion against the traditionally accepted restraints" who had led a largely self-directed existence previously but was now tasked with managing a traditionally configured household with as many as a dozen people (relatives and servants, in addition to her and Liang's children) depending on her for domestic responsibilities that "were calculated to consume most of her time and energies within her four walls."232 Shu-mei Shih has also written of the literary scene of the self-consciously modernist Jingpai 京派 or "Beijing school" that surrounded and in many ways centered on Lin at this time that it was "predicated on an agenda of recuperating the traditional as constitutive of the modern" in a form of bicultural cosmopolitanism "that saw the East/West divide in modern Chinese cultural constructions as artificial, but the gender divide was often left unchallenged […] If it had been difficult for

women to write during the May Fourth period, under the hegemonic rhetoric of antitraditionalism, one could argue that it must have been even more arduous for women writers in the Jingpai milieu.\textsuperscript{233} In contrast to the prototypical "new woman" figure associated with the May Fourth movement, Lin Huiyin had to carve out a role that balanced model wifehood with modernist aspiration. Yet her efforts to do this were remarkably successful when looked at through the lens of the 1930s rather than in the romanticized long view that actually diminishes Lin's accomplishments in writing and as an editor for literary journals, a member of the committee that awarded Cao Yu the first major recognition of his playwriting, and someone whose evaluations of the writing of her peers was highly valued.

With typical aplomb, Lin transformed the domestic space into a stage in the form of the weekly salon that she hosted at the growing family's new home in Beijing, while working with Liang Sicheng in his research and publishing as he established the School of Architecture at Tsinghua University and directed the Institute for Research in Chinese Architecture. The couple's architectural discoveries and preservation efforts would soon become the stuff of legend, while the salon itself, which was modelled to some extent on the Bloomsbury Group in its literary and cultural focus, became what Weijie Song has argued was a place that "blurred the boundary between the private and the public, between a female inner chamber and the patriarchal domain of a traditional Chinese family."\textsuperscript{234} Lin's salon, which would continue until the family's displacement in 1937 by the Japanese invasion and was resumed in the mid-1940s, was familiarly known as "Mrs.' Salon" (\textit{Taitai de keting} 太太的客厅, sometimes translated as \textit{Madam's Salon}), emphasizing Lin's domestic role. The caustic narrator of the thinly veiled

\textsuperscript{233} Shih, \textit{Lure of the Modern}, 205.
version of the salon that appears in the 1933 short story of the same name by Bing Xin 冰心 (1900–99) satirizes the theatricality of how the hostess of the salon poses around the house as a symptom of a false feminism. The taitai who "likes to talk about women's rights and rail against slavery" has the bond servant who was given to her as a wedding present learn English and dress as a Western maid to impress her guests.\(^{235}\) She treats her daughter as a prop in photographs and has the girl's outfits coordinated to show off her own, relegating her daughter to a "supporting role" (peijiao 配角) because she has been "used her whole life to being the character center-stage."\(^{236}\) In the fictionalized account in Bing Xin's story, and in accounts of the actual salon, the hostess is depicted as surrounded by men who are both admiring and flattering, and Lin's salon is most often described in relation to men affiliated with the salon who were infatuated with her. Song's recent article has revisited the salon as a site where Lin "physically transgressed the ideological and gender boundaries between man and woman, masculinity and femininity, society and family, as well as between tradition and modernity."\(^{237}\) The salon, as a formal space, was also continuous with Lin's always self-conscious presentation of herself as a public figure and cultural translator signifying the modern woman and "leader of modernists." The scenario of Lin's unfinished play *Meizhen and Them* can be read in many ways as a response to Bing Xin's satire of the hostess of the salon and especially the relationship with the servant Daisy: in the play, the servant Meizhen becomes the focus of "them," not only of the many men who surround her, but also of the women trying to place her within the new order of a modernizing world, as analyzed in the next section.


\(^{236}\) "喜欢谈女权，痛骂人口的买卖." 

\(^{237}\) Song, "The Aesthetic versus the Political," 62.
It was during this period that Lin also began publishing poems, translations, short fiction, and essays in periodicals, whether under one of her own names—sometimes signing as Huiyin 徽音, other times combining her surnames as Liang Lin Huiyin 梁林徽音, or adding "P. Lin," as are both seen with a drawing to illustrate an early publication by Shen Congwen 沈从文—or occasionally under pseudonyms.  

[Figure 2.6] Lin eventually found it necessary to rename herself again with the version of her given name in common use today, Huiyin 徽因, this time to distinguish her name in Chinese from that of a male poet. In late 1931, a publication titled Poetry Journal (Shi kan 诗刊) ran a correction reading: "The author Lin Huiyin 林徽音 in this issue is a woman, while the author of 'Sound and Color' and the previously published poem 'Green,' Lin Weiyin 林薇音, is a man. Their two names are too easy to confuse with each other, and people often misidentify them; there are sometimes printing errors [...] so this is a clarification, to avoid the suspicion of taking credit or counterfeiting each other!" When Lin's work for theater was referenced, as in reviews of her sets, and in the debate over stage design discussed below, however, she was often referred to not as the taitai 太太 of the salon, nor as nüshi 女士, the respectful name for a woman, but rather as xiansheng 先生, the common male honorific that also means "teacher," recognizing Lin as an expert.

Despite several critics advocating for the inclusion of Lin's essays about theater, previously uncollected, in Lin's collected writings, they were omitted from the complete edition.
Figure 2.6.

Illustration for a scene from a story by Shen Congwen, signed both Liang Lin Huiyin and P. Lin (in drawing), 1931. Literature and Art Monthly (Wenyi yuekan 文艺月刊) 2:8, 1931.
published in 2012 with the approval of Lin's family. Yan Xiaoxing has suggested that this could be because these essays fail to fit the categories of either Lin's literary writing and or her writing on architecture. Zhao Guozhong argues that "the discovery of these uncollected essays may help us toward a fuller and more authentic understanding of Lin Huiyin," tacitly acknowledging the possibility Lin's incisive wit and harsh tenor is somewhat at odds with the romanticized image of the author. This is relevant insofar as the articles on set design, if included in the collected work, would displace Lin's memorial of Xu Zhimo, who died in a plane crash in 1931, as Lin's earliest known published essays. The exclusion of both pieces from the authorized collected editions of Lin Huiyin's writing may be in part attributable to differences in style, but it is also the case that Lin's theater investments and activities have been left out of the popular versions of her career.

Lin's first foray into publishing about theater was to take part in a debate over stage design, when she provoked a sharp discussion with Yu Shangyuan in the pages of the Morning Post supplement over the production values of a 1931 production of Hubert Henry Davies' The Mollusc (1907) directed by Xiong Foxi in a translation by Y. R. Chao 赵元任 (1892–1982), titled Ruanti dongwu 软体动物; in Chinese the word for "mollusks," literally "soft-bodied creatures," discloses the etymology of this name more clearly than is retained in English from the

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240 “On Difficulties in Set Design and Behind the Scenes," "I Hope There Won't Be a Rigid Battle of Words over the The Mollusc," and "The First Act" have been republished in some collections of Lin Huiyin's writing since 2017, but not in the complete edition authorized by the Liang family.


Latin *mollis* or "soft." Lin, who was on bedrest after a relapse of tuberculosis, had not seen the production in person, but rather based her critique titled "On Difficulties in Set Design and Behind the Scenes" (*Sheji he muhou kunnan wenti* 设计和幕后困难问题) on two essays that Yu and the set designer Chen Zhice 陈治策 had published to coincide with the opening of their production: Yu's "The Mollusc's Set Design" (*Ruanti dongwu de wutai sheji* 软体动物的舞台设计) and Chen's "Behind the Scenes of The Mollusc" (*Ruanti dongwu de mu hou* 软体动物的幕后).243 Lin's article "On Difficulties" opens by summarizing the public response to the play, available through published reports, as being positive with regard to the play's translation, acting, and overall production, while critical of the set and backdrops, and, worse, that issues with the stage design and backstage management had resulted in sets that seemed "(according to the critics) 'thrown together and hasty' and "(according to the critics) 'with everything ad hoc"."244 Lin's careful bracketing of her criticisms as being quoted from or based on published reviews and first-hand accounts apparently did little to lessen the impact of the critique, which may have seemed like an attack especially to Yu and Xiong, both original members of the Chinese Drama Reform Society. Yu and Chen then separately published rebuttals titled respectively "In Response to Ms. Lin Huiyin" (*Da Lin Huiyin nüshi* 答林徽音女士) and "The Mollusc Used White Bedsheets—In Response to Teacher Lin Huiyin" (*Routi dongwu yong de baibu danzi—da Lin Huiyin xiansheng* 软体动物用的白布单子—答林徽音先生), referencing Lin's specific,

243 The original essays and rebuttals by Yu Shangyuan, Chen Zhice, and Lin Huiyin all appeared in the *Morning Post* theater supplement between late July and late August 1931. I was not able to consult the *Chenbao* directly for these dates. See Zhao Guozhong, "The War of Words over the Performance of The Mollusc," 44-9. The full text of Lin's "Sheji he muhou kunnan wenti" 设计和幕后困难问题 [On Difficulties in Set Design and Behind the Scenes] is included in Yan Xiaoxing, "An Important Lost Essay by Lin Huiyin," 2004 and also reprinted in the 2005 edition of Lin's complete works, 139-42.

244 "布景（根据批评人）“凑合敷衍”一点，（根据批评人）“处处很将就些”了."
and, to Yu and Chen, trivial complaint that the use of untreated white sheets showed a lack of attention to how this would read onstage as part of an overall color scheme. Zhao Guozhong notes in an article recovering the Mollusc controversy that this use of the "In Response to ___" construction by both Yu and Chen marked a definite escalation in the debate.245 Lin responded with a de-escalation in her published response, "I Hope There Won't Be a Rigid Battle of Words [literally: Lawsuit about Words] over The Mollusc," in a response admirable for its modelling of its matter through playing on the words yingti or "hard-bodied," i.e., rigid, and ruanti or "soft-bodied," like the mollusk.

In her rebuttal Lin addresses Chen's complaint that as someone who was not there she could not raise valid criticisms by carefully reiterating how her critique was formed on the basis of what was available in published reviews and accounts from contributors to the production, rather than hearsay.246 Lin emphasizes the validity of her critique even without being present while also comparing herself to the titular mollusk, writing that she did not attend "because I have been in Xishan due to illness for more than four months as a true 'mollusk,' without the freedom to rise because I want to, not to speak of going into the city to see the play (although I have suggested it, but it was prohibited)."247 In comparing herself to the central character of The Mollusc, Dulcie, Lin is reminding her readers of the play's central metaphor of "molluscry," which figures someone, usually the woman of the house, who does nothing both passively and resistively:

245 Quoted in Zhao, "Yin Routi dongwu," 47.
246 It is worth recalling that Xiong Foxi's announcement of the Chinese Drama Reform Society had similarly appraised the Chitra production from a distance, given that Xiong was directing The Mollusc.
247 "因为鄙人是卧病在西山四个来月的一个真正的‘软体动物’, 没有随便起来的自由，更提不到进城看戏(虽曾提议却被阻止了)," 47.
Baxter: Is molluscry the same as laziness?
Tom: No, not altogether. The lazy flow with the tide. The mollusc uses force to resist pressure. It's amazing the amount of force a mollusc will use, to do nothing, when it would be so much easier to do something.²⁴⁸

Lin then reframes her overarching argument about staging plays in even clearer terms: that there are some things which can be controlled or anticipated, which are the domain of the stage designer, and those which are exceptional, for which one can be justified in apologizing to an audience. To apologize for avoidable mistakes diminishes the centrality and importance of the work that stage designers and stage hands undertake, and in publishing their behind-the-scenes accounts, Lin argues, Yu and Chen have done the play's production a disservice.

Both the initial essay and rebuttal allow for a view into of Lin's theory of theater, illustrating a perspective that prizes staging, preparation, and arrangement, drawing in part from her studies in stage design at the Yale School of Drama and in part from a propensity for setting the scene to the best advantage that Lin exercised in all areas of her consciously staged life. In the critique of *The Mollusc* production Lin draws from seemingly small technical and production details to make larger arguments about what matters in the theater. With set design, she uses the example of the noisily flapping paper substituting for windows that could easily have been remedied; with the behind-the-scenes issues, she references the reviews that mentioned unreasonably long delays between scenes that Chen had attributed to backstage chaos on the day of the performance and Lin argues could have been avoided with proper preparation. In this

latter criticism, Lin may be recalling the praise of the internal *Finished* production in 1928: "With so many scenes, it astonished this reviewer that the shifting could be done so quickly, so silently, so unerringly—it seems almost as if the curtain was rolled down on one scene to be rolled up immediately upon the next." In response to Yu and Chen's excuses offered for the production's staging and backstage difficulties, Lin contends:

In all fairness, there is no undertaking that does not meet with difficulties. We could almost say: an undertaking is by its nature a synthesis of all kinds of difficulties, and what we use to address and resolve these difficulties are what we call "method," "technique," and "artistic creation." Rehearsing for a play is the same as doing anything else. The undertaking involves many difficulties, such that addressing those difficulties, and completing the rehearsal for this play, are the aims of theater-makers. [...] The aim is not "to please the audience," because aiming for that would bring disaster, when what matters to most artists is expressing their highest ideal without caring about whether it caters to the audience. To put it another way, the aim is to convey that ideal to the highest extent possible, expending effort to resolve, to address, any sort of difficulty that arises in putting on a play, to the fullest extent possible, and then offer it to the audience for analysis or appreciation.  

The concern here is not that the lack of attention to details or the unnecessary delays in *The Mollusc* "break the illusion," as discussed with Chen Dabei's article about staging challenges for the *aimeide* theater. Throughout the essays when talking about staging Lin is not interested in the question of verisimilitude, but rather of theater business: there is a world of difference, she

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249 *Finished* program critique, Productions and Program Critiques 1929-30, YRG 22-B Series VII, Box 69 Folder 172, Records of the Yale School of Drama, University Library, Yale Archives.
argues, between a backdrop that falls by accident, and a backdrop that falls because the stagehand forgot to buy nails and used a rope to secure it instead. This difference applies regardless of the scale of the production and questions of economy or what the theater can afford, and stands also separate from whether this is amateur theater, little theater, or commercial theater.

While the larger proportion of Lin's two articles on the 1931 *Mollusc* production addresses what Chen Zhice had written about the sets and behind the scenes confusion, the most substantive critique refers instead to Yu Shangyuan's essay on stage design and its focus on "the 'borrowing' question (jie' de wenti '借'的问题). In describing the opening of the play, Yu had offered an apologia for the little theater, writing that, "The theater space is borrowed, and was often not available, the scenery and costumes are all borrowed, whether they are suitable or not […] in addition to everything else, and also quite shameful, all of the props come from one household or another, and there has been no chance to choose them carefully." Lin points out that to say the art of setting the stage is the 'borrowing' art is a truism not limited to China, to little theater, or really anywhere—giving the example of running around New Haven for days when she was at the YSD trying to find a "whatnot"—and whether that means borrowing, renting, or buying, everything in the theater comes from somewhere else. In a conclusion calling for schools and other public spaces to include space for performing plays, Lin returns several times to the idea of the physical stage as a metaphorical microcosm of the world that serves as a backdrop for the lives of all kinds of people and "all different periods, places, races, social classes," but that at the same time does not contain them: "where is there a theater large enough

251 "剧场是借的，往往还借不到手，布景服装也都是借的，不管合用 不合用 […] 其余的一切，照样惭愧得很，都是张家李家王家的东西，并且没有机会可以仔细的选择," 45.
to store everything in the myriad universe in reserve until it is needed?" Ultimately this is a statement not only about specific theater spaces, but also about forms of theater (especially huaju) as being focused on selection and arrangement of elements for what they signify, rather than borrowing of necessity.

"The First Act": On Playwriting

The standalone article on playwriting Lin Huiyin would publish in 1934 is stylistically different than most of her other writing in its straightforward diction and educational tone. When writing "The First Act" (Di yi mu 第一幕), which appeared in the theater supplement of the Huabei Daily (Huabei ribao 华北日报), Lin may well have started composing the play Meizhen and Them (Meizhen tong tamen 梅真同他们, 1937), with thematic overlap that also encourages interpreting the essay as a commentary on Lin's own playwriting. The governing metaphor of "The First Act" imagines the playwright talking to the first act as if she were a mother who is expecting a guest and placing responsibility for making preparations and hosting on the eldest daughter: "The author even before lifting the pen is saying apologetically, 'You are the first-born daughter, after all,' but at the same time without ceremony is placing many responsibilities on this eldest daughter who is trying to keep up appearances." The metaphor of hosting guests extends to the introduction of characters to the audience, again voiced as the author-mother.

252 "试想戏剧是人生的缩影: 时代, 地点, 种族, 社会阶级之种种不同, 那有一个戏剧有偌大宝库里面万物尽有的储起来待用?","140.
254 "作者在未动笔以前是难为情的说“你还是大姊姊呢”, 但是同时也毫不客气的, 把许多责任加在这要撑面子的大女儿身上!", ibid.
speaking to the first act-first daughter: "You should know that we don't have much time. You need to be economical, agile, and make the introductions without showing a trace [of your effort], put everything on display—place, time, character background, mutual relationships, the nature of each character!" This metaphor of the first act as the eldest daughter can be interpreted biographically, since Lin was the eldest daughter of her family as well as the definite favorite and trusted travel companion of her diplomat father, Lin Changmin. Although her relationship with her mother, who had no surviving children other than Lin and was, according to Fairbank, obsessively jealous of her father's second wife, remained difficult throughout her life, she was herself in the role of the eldest daughter running the household and hosting its often prestigious visitors. It is notable, though, that the eldest daughter is also the villain of Meizhen and Them who insists on keeping up appearances too much, especially in sticking to an arranged engagement made under false pretenses. As a supplement to the biographical interpretation, "The First Act" also establishes a familial model for playwriting that is emphatically matrilineal, and in this regard is not unlike the character map of Lin Huiyin's unfinished play Meizhen and Them that centers on a widowed second wife, three daughters (one is a half-sibling), and the servant Meizhen who has been treated like an adopted poor relation, with the father deceased and the brother absent for the first half of the play.

Meizhen and Them displays the self-reflective engagement with Anglo-European modernism of the Jingpai school while also presenting a clear example of Lin's intersemiotic modelling of the modern through its play with signifiers. For example, Meizhen and Them depicts the bohemian sisters and their group of artist friends getting ready to hold a salon that

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255 "你得知道我们时间真不多，你得经济，敏捷，一样一样的不露痕迹的介绍起来，展演起来——地点，时间，人物的背景，互相的关系，人物每个的本身!," ibid.
will involve decorating their rooms in the "futurist" manner; the conversation revolves constantly around how everyone is suddenly turned "modeng" (modern) while the young women chatter about how to dress "proletarian." Their tolerant mother gently laments her daughters' inability to handle social engagements, cook, or clean, and the play's central tension revolves around the intelligent, independent-minded servant girl the family has raised, educated, and now has no idea what to do with: should they arrange for her to get married, pay her better, help her get a job elsewhere?

The serial publication of *Meizhen and Them* began with the first issue of *Literary Journal* (*Wenxue zazhi* 文学杂志), for which Lin also designed the cover and served on the editorial committee, with the first three acts appearing on the first days of June, July, and August of 1937 respectively. [Figure 2.7] With the Japanese encroachment on Beijing and increasing hostilities that summer of the Second Sino-Japanese War, known in Chinese as the War of Resistance against Japan, Lin and Liang Sicheng removed the holdings of their architecture institute to safety and themselves fled Beijing in September, beginning months of arduous displacement made more difficult for the family by the recurrence of Lin's illness.²⁵⁶ *Literary Journal* eventually announced that the publication of *Meizhen and Them* would not be completed. Chen Xueyong reports that when Lin was later asked what happened to the fourth and final act of the play, Lin replied, "Meizhen went to the War of Resistance" ("梅真抗日去了"), a brief statement typical of Lin's style in its layered possibilities: that the completion of the play *Meizhen* had been lost to the war, that a written fourth act had been lost during the war, or that the character Meizhen had herself gone to aid the war effort, a plausible outcome in the play's scenario.

Regardless, Lin chose not to write or rewrite the play between 1937 and her death in 1955, yet

Figure 2.7

Cover of Literary Journal (Wenxue zahi 文学杂志), logo designed by Lin Huiyin, 1937.
even in its unfinished state *Meizhen and Them*’s absence from theater scholarship remains surprising, especially given the imbalance between male and female playwrights in the study of twentieth-century Chinese theater history. The 1930s are widely considered the apex of playwriting in the *huaju* form, especially the trilogy by Cao Yu 曹禺 (1910–96) of *Thunderstorm* (*Leiyu* 雷雨, 1935), *Sunrise* (*Richu* 日出, 1936) and *The Wilderness* (*Yuanye* 原野, 1937), and *Meizhen* was remembered by some who read it at the time as a work of comparable quality and impact.

The character schema in *Meizhen and Them* centers on the Li household comprised of Qiong 琼, a widowed mother; four children in early adulthood including Wenjuan 文娟, the daughter of her father's first wife, also deceased, Qiong's son Wenqing 文靖, her two daughters Wenxia 文霞 and Wenqi 文琪, and two servants, a young woman named Meizhen 梅真 and an older male servant named Rongshen 荣升. Wenjuan, who is peevish and bitter, believes herself engaged to a family friend, Tang Yuanlan 唐元澜 who recently returned from a long period studying abroad to find that a meddling aunt had arranged the marriage in his absence after he had rejected it. Wenjuan dislikes Tang but feels it will be an insult to have the engagement dissolved, while Tang is trying to extricate himself from the arrangement so that he can propose to Meizhen. Meizhen is in turn in love with the brother, Wenqing, and also fielding two other marriage offers, one from an enterprising electrician, Song Xiong 宋雄, who has proposed to her repeatedly and the other proposed to the mother Qiong by a neighbor who wants Meizhen to marry her wealthy, opium-addicted son. The sister Wenqi, an idealistic bookworm, becomes engaged in the second act to a young painter, Huang Zhongwei 黄仲维. The New Year's party the household is throwing to celebrate the visit home of Wenqing, who is completing an
apprenticeship as an engineer, becomes also an engagement party for them. The plotlines converge toward crisis at the party, with the additional instigation that the mother Qiong has asked that the children invite Meizhen, the family's servant, to the party as a guest.

The central dilemma of the play centers on Meizhen, with the subplot about the engagement between the youngest sibling, Wenqi, and the painter Huang Zhongwei acting as a romantic counterpoint that resolves by the end of the second of the (projected) four acts. Meizhen had been purchased as a bond servant when she was a young child, making her functional status that of a household slave. Qiong, the mother of the Li family, had wanted to raise Meizhen as an adopted family member and sent her to school with the daughter of the father's first wife, until Wenjuan and her mother protested that it was embarrassing to go to school with a servant. Later, after the deaths of both her husband and his first wife, Qiong regrets spending more than a decade acting as the "old type of daughter-in-law" (旧式儿媳妇) and begins to pay Meizhen a salary. The youngest sister, Wenqi, tries to treat Meizhen like a close friend; Wenxia, an eager social reformer, attempts to enlighten Meizhen by teaching her socialism, while Wenjuan continues to complain that Meizhen does not know her place in the house and is treated too well. Practically every character in the play has an opinion of what should be done with Meizhen. Among the younger generation, Wenqi imagines both her and Meizhen becoming famous novelists (Meizhen jokes bitterly that she has no time to write); Wenxia wants Meizhen to break through class barriers to join the sisters' social circle; Wenjuan and her friend Aizhu 爱珠 want Meizhen to learn her place as a servant. Tang Yuanlan believes that the "there is only one solution: to let her go, to leave your house, and forget about you. She could be sent to school or work somewhere else—at most you could help her a bit along the
way—anything would be fine, so long as she leaves."\(^{257}\) Most of the eligible men in the play want to marry Meizhen, and the Li family's son, Wenqing, has been avoiding coming home because he is also in love with Meizhen but believes asking her to marry him will disappoint his mother. At the time of the play Qiong is trying to figure out what to do with Meizhen now that she is almost an adult, especially because she has had offers of marriage for Meizhen from neighboring families. In asking the daughters to invite Meizhen to the New Year's party as a guest, Qiong treats the event as a coming out party meant to signal Meizhen being a member of the family. The unfinished plot of *Meizhen and Them* sets up the potential conflict of whether Qiong could accept Meizhen as an actual member of the family in marrying the brother Wenqing.

While there would have been little precedent for Lin's maternal playwright model either in early *huaju* or her studies in American theater, "The First Act" does the work of establishing a theater genealogy for Lin as a playwright in *Meizhen and Them* through the series of examples she deploys to illustrate the challenges and importance of a play's first act. The essay proceeds chronologically through the first acts of four plays, moving from Henrik Ibsen's *Master Builder* (*Bygmester Solness*, 1892; Lin cites Ibsen's letter on *Master Builder* saying that the first act was the most difficult), to George Bernard Shaw's *Candida* (1894), to Eugene O'Neill's *Strange Interlude* (1928), and Elmer Rice's *Adding Machine* (1923). The plays Lin cites here not only include the realism of a problem play like *Candida*, which is ultimately closest in genre to *Meizhen and Them*, but also present extensions beyond realism from *Master Builder* to the more

\(^{257}\) "也许只有一个办法，让她走，离开你们家，忘掉你们，上学去，让她到别处去做事——顶多你们从旁帮她一点忙——什么都行，就是得走，" 167. Quotations from *Meizhen and Them* are from the June, July, and August issues of *Literary Journal* with comparison to *Lin Huiyin quanji* 林徽因全集 [Complete Works of Lin Huiyin] (Beijing: New World Press, 2012), with page numbers included from the latter.
experimental forms of expressionism in the American plays of the 1920s. Lin's focus on the first act of a play and how it sets out characters and background is unsurprising given the emphasis she placed on presentation and creating impressions. At the same time, the essay speaks only to beginnings of plays while also suggesting that everything to develop in the play is contained in the beginning and will unfold across its course, such that the first act is both a finished and unfinished artifact.

**Conclusion: Unfinished Business in Meizhen and Them**

Lin's next three years after writing "The First Act" marked her most productive period in the Beijing theater including her designing the sets for at least two major plays, both produced in 1935: John Quincey-Wong's *She Stoops to Compromise* in Li Jianwu's translation (discussed in the next chapter) and an adaptation of Moliere's *The Miser* (*L'Avare, Caikuang* 财狂) directed by P. C. Chang and with Cao Yu, at the height of his acting career, in the title role. [Figure 2.8] Edward Gunn groups *The Miser* with other plays in 1935 that marked "the beginning of a growing critical acceptance of Chinese productions of foreign plays in translation. This important development was the reward of years of patient effort to improve staging techniques."²⁵⁸ A contemporary review of *The Miser* by Xiao Qian 萧乾 found that, "The audience was led into a world of varied light and color: it is Teacher [*xiansheng*] Lin Huiyin's set. On a stage extremely restricted in depth and width, not accepting the restriction on space for
Figure 2.8

an architect, [Lin] utilizes buildings and stairs to three-dimensional effect, utilizes the entrancing bright blue sky, to open up a wide space for the audience's visual imagination." In designing these sets, Lin exercises her imagination to make maximal use of non-ideal and limited spaces as constraints, and in turning to writing her own play, she designed it, too, to be played in constrained spaces with a single continuous yet transforming setting.

In the first act of *Meizhen and Them*, Wenqi and Meizhen have been laughing and chatting before turning to discuss the party the daughters are planning to welcome their brother home at New Year. Meizhen reveals that she has invited the guests and made preparations for the meal after teasing Wenqi for completely forgetting these not-so-minor details. Wenqi says that she knew Meizhen must have been joking about these things not getting done, and the conversation grows serious:

Meizhen: You can't take back what you said. What is a servant supposed to do then?  
Wenqi: Does that matter? In all seriousness, I want you to forget about being a servant or not being a servant (sees Meizhen's bitter smile) You—you are here as a… as a friend…  
Meizhen: A friend? Whose friend?  
Wenqi: Here to help out…  
Meizhen: Help out? Why should I help out?  
Wenqi: A relative… a distant relative from far away…  
Meizhen: Enough, don't make up pleasant-sounding names for it. You'll hurt your precious little head! A servant is a servant. It's unfortunate but there's nothing you can do about it. Even if someone wants to help there's nothing they can do, except... except that someday I'm going away, I won't be in this house any more!  

259 "观众是被领入一个光色陆离的世界去了，那是林徽因先生设计的布景。在这样深度、宽度都极有限的舞台上，不甘受空间拘束的建筑师，利用富立体感的亭阁石阶，利用明媚的蓝天，为观众的视觉幻想辟一辽广境界。"

260 "梅 话不又说回来了么，到底一个丫头的职务是什么呀?  
琪 管它呢？我正经劝你把这丫头不丫头的事忘了它，（看到梅抿抿嘴冷笑）你——你就当在这里做……做个朋友……  
梅 朋友？谁的朋友。  
琪 帮忙的……
In this dialogue and the plot structure centered on Meizhen, Lin Huiyin invokes *huaju* archetypes popularized in the New Culture movement in the late 1910s and 1920s: Nora from Ibsen's *A Doll's House* and Yamei from Hu Shi's 1919 *Greatest Event in Life* (*Zhong shen da shi* 终身大事). In May Fourth discourse, as discussed in Chapter One, Nora and Yamei represented the often idealized "new woman" (*xin nüxing* 新女性) figure who breaks away from traditional family structures and also symbolizes the modernizing nation. Yamei in particular represented marrying by personal choice rather than having marriage arranged by her family, leaving her parents suddenly to join her boyfriend who is waiting outside in a car. In *The Hero and the Beauty* Chen Dabei, like Lu Xun in his well-known 1923 lecture on Ibsen's *Doll's House*, had imaginatively anticipated the harsh outcomes a Chinese Nora might experience after leaving the home. Although the popularity of the Nora figure continued unabated, it was by the 1930s increasingly available to critique by writers including Eileen Chang (Zhang Ailing 张爱玲, 1920–95), who satirized how the "unanalytical acceptance of foreign romances—reality twice removed—results in much posturizing" in an English-language film review that Gunn highlights in discussing the continuing popularity of *A Doll's House* and other Western plays in the late 1930s:

A glance at the personal column in Chinese newspapers ("Since you disappeared, mother refuses to eat or leave her bed. Grandmother had her heart attacks. Whole family daily washes face with tears. Return at once") shows us that Chinese under thirty are prone to walk out of their homes because of abstract principles, domestic disputes, failure to pass examinations, the incompatibility of cultural atmosphere, etc. Perhaps no other work has

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梅 帮忙的? 为什么帮忙?
琪 远亲......一个远房里小亲戚......
influenced the average educated Chinese of this century so much as Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House*, and in this, as in everything else learned from the West, the Chinese are more impressed by the bleak beauty of Nora’s gesture than by the underlying thought.\(^\text{261}\)

Meizhen's version of what Gunn follows Chang in calling the "bleak gesture" of Nora's leaving home—"someday I'm going away"—differs in tenor and possibilities from Yamei's "This is the greatest event in my life. I must decide for myself." Lin's play about Meizhen leaving (or not leaving) home complicates the Nora and Yamei paradigms with additional dimensions of class and gender, rather than being the clean break from tradition that the "new woman" represents. In the logic of the play, Meizhen cannot stay in the Li household precisely because the family has treated her in a somewhat more enlightened way that makes her unable to continue as the household's servant into her adult life. Even though Wenjuan and Qiong's personal views are reversed from their generational expectations—Wenjuan insists on keeping up a loveless arranged engagement with Tang even though Qiong urges her to break it off, while the children consider their mother the most modern of them all—the end result of Wenjuan's complaints or Qiong's sympathy is the same: that Meizhen needs to leave. At the same time, the play makes it painfully clear that the prototypical "new woman" lives of the family's daughters—whether Wenqi's literary pursuits and marriage of choice or Wenxia's social reform activism—are supportable only because Meizhen keeps the household running smoothly and relieves them of any domestic responsibilities. The access to education, both formal and through literary works loaned by Tang Yuanlan, who brings books for Wenjuan knowing that Meizhen will read them instead, and Wenxia, who is teaching Meizhen socialist theory, has served, at least at the point of

the play’s start, only to make Meizhen a superior servant who better anticipates what the three young women of the house will need or have forgotten to do.

The most obvious way for Meizhen to leave the Li household is through marriage, and the play provides a surfeit of suitors including the brother, Wenqing; Tang Yuanlan; the local electrician, Song Xiong; the neighbor's opium-addicted son; etc., and these men are the most obvious referent of the "Them" of the play's title. However, "Them" could just as well be the women who surround Meizhen. Even in Meizhen's lowest moments she is able to deflate the expected Yamei cliché by casting herself as the central figure in a more traditional form of tragedy, as seen in the monologue after Song Xiong proposes to her (again): "(sighs) All that feeling expended on me, a true injustice! I am fated to bitter hardship, to hang myself, to die by leaping into a river! Not to be the wife managing an electrician's shop. (giggles) The wife managing an electrician's shop!"

262 The more biting critique in Lin's play is that even within this matriarchal and intensely feminine Li household, including the son Wenqing, who is occupied through his major scene on his return to the household in Act III with combing his sister Wenqi's wet hair, Meizhen's dilemma as a servant who, as Wenjuan says, "no one can manage to oppress" ("谁能压迫梅真"), remains as complex and seemingly irresolvable as if there had been no Nora or Yamei preceding her. In this way deep skepticism about the New Culture project and a certain model of the modern comes to the fore even as the characters all believe, as Tang comments, that "everyone is becoming so modern" ("大家都——都很摩登起来").

262 "（叹息）那心用在我身上，真冤！我是命里注定该吃苦，上吊，跳河的！怎么做电料行的掌柜娘，（发憨笑。）电料行的掌柜娘！", Lin, Meizhen and Them (2012), 182.
In the editor's introduction to the first issue of *Literary Journal*, Zhu Guangqian 朱光潜 (1897–1986) included an excerpt from a letter Lin Huiyin had written about the play, reading in part:

Theater productions must have fluidity like water, like the shimmer of ripples that can within two minutes draw people's attention into a *make-believe* [English in the original] world to love or hate, to be pleased or enraged by these characters. For an intelligent girl like Meizhen to be treated as a servant in the Li household is a pitiably difficult situation. In the restricted timeframe of two minutes, her actions, the many kinds of arrangements she makes for herself and for others, are what I want people to notice. This is my play. 263

Here the same qualities Lin advocated for in discussing scene design in the *Mollusc* debate are those she ascribes to the leading character Meizhen; "the many kinds of arrangement she makes for herself and for others." In parallel to the restrictions of space that Lin discusses with sets in her theater essays, in writing about *Meizhen and Them* she intensifies the theme of "The First Act" about compressing the entire intensity and potential development of a play into its opening. At the same time Lin signals that it is what the character Meizhen does, rather than Meizhen's dilemma about leaving, that matters.

Within the first few minutes of appearing onstage, it is Meizhen who comes up with the idea of transforming the traditional study—which the stage directions indicate has already been turned into something like a college dormitory space by the younger daughters—into a futurist lounge for their party. In the play's first line, Qiong gently teases her daughters for leaving the

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room such a mess right before the New Year, when cleaning house is customary, so that the redecoration Meizhen proposes for the party becomes an ultramodern gesture overlapping a traditional one. The young women in the play are depicted as already playing in one way or another with the signifiers of the cultural modern (modeng 摩登), whether Wenqi learning to smoke cigarettes because all modern writers smoke, or Wenxia's self-consciously drab clothing, about which Wenqi teases her, saying that Wenxia "is actually more than modern, a bit in the proletarian camp. It's conflicted, she says so herself […] (holding up Wenxia's skating outfit to herself) See, this color isn't too bourgeois, is it?" Meizhen takes the idea further to a full redecoration of the study space, proving so original and effective in her planning that the others joke that she is so good at arranging things she should be a theater director, and Meizhen teases back that she could direct Wenqi's romantic novel or Wenxia's masterpiece promoting humanitarianism. The redecoration of the room is a humorous but ultimately serious extension of these small performances of the modern.

The redecoration of the study as a futurist lounge is coterminous with the play's actual scene transitions: the entire play takes place as a continuous set in a single room as it transforms from the study-cum-dormitory where Wenqi and Wenxia spend most of their time. (The missing fourth act, to the extent that this can be projected from what comes before, would have centered on the New Year's party welcoming Wenqing home and taken place in the same room.) Illustrating the economy of theater practice Lin Huiyin emphasized in her theater essays, as well as Lin's realistic sense of the limitations of where non-professional theater productions were being staged in 1930s China, there are no significant stage effects or demands other than the

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264 "琼 大年下里，你们几个人用不着把房子弄得这么乱呀!," ibid., 146.
265 “其实更摩登，有点普罗派，可很矛盾的，她自己也那么说 […]（比在自己身上）你看，这颜色不能算太“布尔乔雅”吧?,” ibid., 162.
changing furnishings and decorations. This staged change of the room's decorations enacts the intersemiotic (re)modelling of the space with overt modernist gestures. Act II takes place, described in hyperbolic language, "in the middle of the creation of the futurist smoking room, when the universe was still chaos, heaven and earth not yet in their places" ("所谓未来派的吃烟室尚在创造中，天下混沌，玄黄未定"). The centerpiece of the futurist salon is already in place, a large screen painted with "thick, bright colors, but indistinguishable subjects" ("一些颜色鲜浓，而题材不甚明"), along with another painting that is described simply as "bizarre enough to make people look at it" ("也是怪诞叫人注目的作品"), both painted by Huang at Meizhen's suggestion that he "casually paint something modern to hang up" ("随便画点摩登东西挂起来"). At the same time the modernist decoration of the room includes localizing elements familiar from longer-standing Chinese decoration, especially the black, narrow-mouthed vases holding plum flowers and the use of the screen, a traditional painting medium. The play additionally stages several scenes of shocking the "audience" as a neighbor or the other servant Rongsheng come through and are startled by the scene:

Elder Wife [neighbor] (staring at the screen) What is this … this strange monstrosity?
Meizhen: It's a screen.
Elder Wife: What kind of screen looks this strange?
Meizhen (laughing): I don't know.266

In the way that huaju performers, directors, and playwrights were almost always thinking about their work comparatively as either a borrowed or translated Western theatrical form, the

266 "大太 （望屏风） 这是什么东西——这怪里怪气的?
梅 就是屏风。
大太 什么屏风这怪样子?
梅 （笑笑） 我也不知道," ibid., 182.
characters in Lin Huiyin's play are building out a modern setting for themselves that is less borrowed than translated. Gently self-mocking but also intentional, the creation of this salon by the play's characters within the intrasemiotic translation of the play's huaju form offered its audience a microcosmic staging of the modern with space for non-metaphorical women.
Chapter Three: John Wong-Quincey's Translational Metatheater

Professor Kwan: [N]ow that you have whitewashed everybody, may I suggest that you go and wash your own face.
—John Wong-Quincey, She Stoops to Compromise (1929)

Introduction: "Suppose the tables be turned"

Whitewash, applied in the figurative sense of "[t]o conceal the faults or errors of; to free, or attempt to free, from blame," has also been used since at least the 1830s to mean "to accord (someone) the status of white."267 This usage of whitewash within systems of racial classification anticipated the sense that would be added to the Merriam-Webster dictionary in late 2019 of "casting white actors as characters who are non-white or of indeterminate race."268 When John Wong-Quincey (Wang Wenxian 王文显, 1886–1968) invoked the term in 1929 in the last line of a play set in contemporary China and written to be performed by his predominantly white cohort of the Yale School of Drama actors, the metatheatrical implication was clear. The play, She Stoops to Compromise, satirized the intrigues of college administration half a world away at a Chinese university. The play over, though, it was time for the actors to wash off their yellowface makeup, with Professor Kwan saying to the investigator Dr. Chang: "[N]ow that you have whitewashed everybody, may I suggest that you go and wash your own face." Yet what did this signify—and to whom? What was Wong-Quincey conveying to his American audience by

267 OED, whitewash, verb, 3a. transitive.
268 Merriam-Webster, "Words We're Watching: A New Meaning of 'Whitewashing'," <https://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/whitewashing-words-were-watching>.
concluding an otherwise comic play with this serious turn, with the actors instructed, "The rest of the company look at Mr. Chang's face and solemnly turn their heads away"?\(^{269}\) Further, why would a play written to illustrate to audiences in the United States "a real picture of the Chinese as they are, and not as they are supposed to be" become so popular to Chinese audiences in translation a few years later?\(^{270}\) This chapter will explore intersemiotic translations to the stage of this concluding moment of Wong-Quiney's *She Stoops to Compromise* in both its American productions and its interlingual translation and staging in Chinese to address the complexities of this metatheatrical scene.

John Wong-Quiney was born to a British-educated father who had been adopted by Major-General Charles George Gordon ("Chinese Gordon") and later became a police inspector in Hong Kong and a naturalized British citizen, with Quiney added to the surname Wong based, according to the family, on the ancestral home in Kunshan (Quinsan).\(^{271}\) While studying at the University of London in the 1910s, Wong-Quiney showed an acute interest in challenging perceptions of contemporary China abroad that found its initial form in his editing of journals including *The Chinese Review* and *The East in the West* in the 1910s. While similar in content and having overlapping contributors with other publications by overseas Chinese students such as *Chinese Students Monthly* (discussed in Chapter Two), these were distinguished as journalism written for a British or American readership from the Chinese perspective. An editorial from *The


\(^{271}\) On the origin of the family name, I have followed the autobiographical materials appearing in John Wong-Quiney, *Chinese Hunter* (New York: John Day Company, 1939). In some publications the names are reversed as Quiney-Wong. To avoid confusion I have used Wong-Quiney in translations of Chinese-language sources instead of the *pin yin* romanization of Wong-Quiney's Chinese name, Wang Wenxian.
*East in the West* shows Wong-Quincey's early awareness of how important staging and performance could be for a corrective vision of cross-cultural representation.

In the year of grace 1912 the honorable and high-minded promoters of the Anglo-Japanese Exhibition decided to add a touch of Chinese color to the great display at Shepherd's Bush. A scheme was forthwith proposed, and widely advertised in the press, to install a typical opium den within the exhibition grounds, and attempts were made to hire Chinese sailors from the East End to play the part of opium sots and exhibit to the West, in realistic details, all the disgusting particulars associated with opium smoking.

Suppose the tables be turned. Imagine the promoters of a Chinese exhibition proposing to represent Great Britain by setting up the model of a low-class public house, and engaging Britishers to act the role of besotted drunkards. In place of the mild protest raised by the Chinese students Great Britain would probably have sent a fleet of warships to demand reparation for the national insult.\footnote{John Wong-Quincey, editorial from *The East in the West*, sections quoted in *American Review of Reviews*, ed. Albert Shaw (September 1914): 374.}

Wong-Quincey's interest in turning the tables, or reversing perspectives, appears frequently in descriptions such as this one from 1914 that aptly describe some, if not all, of the aims of his later playwriting:

> It will be our aim to give the Chinese view on questions of moment and interest […] not, we repeat, in any spirit of strife or defiance, but as a necessary preliminary towards a more enlightened and helpful understanding. We appeal for that support here in [sic] elsewhere which we all owe to the cause of inter-racial peace, justice and friendship. […] For a number of generations China and the Chinese have been objects of assiduous attention on the part of foreigners. […] Of all the things said and written some have been true, more have been superficial and prejudiced, but one and all have been influenced by the inherent qualities of the mind and civilization of the foreign observer. This commonplace remark deserves to excite no attention; but the fact requires explanation as to why and how we have been able to endure the provoking process of analysis in silence. […] The discussion concerning intercourse between East and West has, for good or for evil, passed the academic stage. The East and West have been thrown together, and are
certain to come into closer contact as time advances. What were once questions more or less theoretical have become actual problems.273

After returning from Europe to China, Wong-Quincey soon began an affiliation with Tsinghua University in Beijing, a preparatory institute at the time called the Tsinghua School with instruction provided for Chinese students planning to study in the United States through the Boxer Indemnity Fund scholarships. Wong-Quincey moved rapidly through the school's administration including a brief tenure as president of the school before settling into a professorship in Western literature, remaining at the university from 1915 to 1937. In this role Wong-Quincey would teach courses on Shakespeare, global drama, and contemporary drama to a large number of future playwrights and theater artists including Cao Yu, Hong Shen, Yang Jiang 杨绛 (1911–2016), Zhang Junxiang 张俊祥 (1910–1996), and Li Jianwu 李健吾 (1906–1982).274 In 1920, Wong-Quincey accompanied a class of Tsinghua students on their educational journey abroad, resulting in the publication of Educational Guide to the United States 留美指南 by Commercial Press in Shanghai the following year, which volume one reviewer called "not merely a handbook: it is a review of every aspect of higher education in America likely to be of interest or profit to students. It is a review that is exhaustive and up-to-date, and is unique because no work of this nature has ever been available hitherto."275 The sections on choice of profession and of college were informed by a large-scale questionnaire of sixty-one former Tsinghua students that covered practical matters from expenses and living quarters to honest appraisals of the degree of exclusivity and prejudice against Chinese students at their respective

275 "The Chinese-American Student," The North-China Herald and Supreme Court and Consular Gazette (August 27, 1921), 663.
institutions. A similar questionnaire was sent to the educational institutions themselves asking, "Is there any prejudice against Chinese students in your institution, and are they treated on an equal footing with American students?" The directness of Wong-Quincey's intervention in the *Educational Guide*, and the multiple viewpoints it provided to readers who could compare the responses of the Tsinghua graduates with the administrators from the American colleges, again parallels the shifting of perspectives that Wong-Quincey would attempt in plays such as *She Stoops to Compromise*.

The preparation of *Educational Guide to the United States*, a "Baedeker's for the Chinese student," doubtless gave Wong-Quincey a highly informed perspective about contemporary American views of contemporary Chinese life. This would in turn inform his playwriting for American audiences starting in 1927 when Wong-Quincey took a sabbatical to became a student in the playwriting program with George Pierce Baker at the Yale School of Drama. Wong-Quincey's two major plays, both written initially for audiences in the United States, would provide a much different picture of contemporary China than available in the current press or existing plays that were openly exclusionary or racist in portrayal.

The influence of Wong-Quincey's work in America is largely underrecognized. His influence on theater in China, however, has lasted to today through his students such that, as Hu Decai explains, "[e]ven though he did not write very many plays, he was one of the first modern

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278 Wong-Quincey attended the Yale School of Drama before it was authorized to grant graduate degrees. However, he is included in lists of school alumni in the school's archives up until at least the 1940s.
generation of Chinese educators and dramatists and made indelible contributions to the
development of modern Chinese drama." As Hu Yifeng has illustrated, Tsinghua, like the
Nankai School in Tianjin, was an important nexus of theatrical activity: "The activities in those
years [1916–37] were characterized by the balance between skills and ideas, and the interflow
between the East and the West. This ethos from campus was carried on by the students after their
graduation, and drama became a lifelong bond among them. Drama on Tsinghua’s campus
therefore had a unique impact on the development of modern Chinese drama." It was one of
Wong-Quincey's students and graduate assistants, Li Jianwu, who would undertake the
translation of Wong-Quincey's American plays into Chinese, leading to a period of popularity in
the mid-1930s in the cities of Beijing, Tianjin, and Shanghai, and elsewhere. These productions
would help support Wong-Quincey through the war until his emigration with his wife, music
teacher Vong Tzu, to join his daughters in the United States, where he gave lecture tours and
taught at institutions of higher education for the remainder of his career. This included beginning
in 1954 a position on the faculty of Spelman College, a historically black-serving institution,
which was a highly apt choice given Wong-Quincey's progressive views on race and
ethnocentrism in the United States.

While relatively few records about Wong-Quincey's later life have survived, several vivid
portraits of him as a memorable campus figure and dispassionate teacher survive from his years

280 "王文显虽然剧本创作不多，但他作为中国现代第一代戏剧教育家和剧作家，对中国现代戏剧
281 Hu Yifeng 胡一峰, "Huaju zai Qinghua yi Qinghua zhouban 1916-1937 wei zhongxin 话剧在清华以「清华周刊」1916-1937为中心 [The Development of Modern Drama at Tsinghua University: A Study of the Publications of Tsinghua Weekly from 1916 to 1937], Xiju yishu 戏剧艺术 2018:1, 34. See also Gong Yuan 龚元, "Zhongguo xiandai huaju shi shang de 'Qinghua chuantong' 中国现代话剧史上的'清华传统 [The 'Tsinghua Tradition' in the History of Modern Chinese Theater]," Xiju yishu 戏剧艺术 2012:3.
at Tsinghua.282 [Figure 3.1] In the foreword to Wong-Quincey's 1939 memoir-travelogue

*Chinese Hunter*, Lin Yutang 林語堂 (1895–1976) describes the seeming discordance of the

Shakespearean scholar and sportsman, writing, "He had a gift for observing facts and was sure of
his facts […] and the general wide-awake quality of his knowledge, in which book-learning and
scoutlike mastery of facts made perfect blend, impressed me, as it also impressed the American
members of the teaching staff. In fact we rather liked him because he could silence the American
members at the faculty meeting by the mere tone of his voice."283 Wong-Quincey's comic self-
portrayal of his lifelong pursuit of the very British and not very Chinese sport of big game
hunting in *Chinese Hunter* itself has been described by John Zou in terms of a (semi)colonial
enunciation. This enunciation, in Homi Bhabha's sense, is evidenced not so much in language as
in physical embodiment of an extreme British athleticism: "As in typical scenarios of cross-
dressing, Wong-Quincey's narrator is situated in a dilemma where on the one hand his
Anglicized person is the ultimate spectacle to be gazed upon, but on the other hand, it also
constitutes the most dreaded visual object that has to be avoided, because his Anglicization is
never quite sufficient."284 Most enduringly, Wong-Quincey was also the subject of one of the
fifty portraits in the series called "Unedited Biographies" or "Intimate Portraits" that ran in 1934
in *The China Critic*, an English-language journal based in Shanghai. As discussed by
Christopher Rea, the humorous send-ups of these portraits parodied the "dense, sanitized
chronologies of professional activities and accomplishments" that appeared in *Who's Who in

282 There is a folder of letters from the 1960s in the Y. R. Zhao archives at the Bancroft Library,
University of California at Berkeley, attributed to Wong-Quincey, but they are in fact written by Vong
Tzu.
283 Lin Yutang, preface to *Chinese Hunter*, 10.
284 John Zou, "English Idiom and Republican China: Repatriated Subject in Wong-Quincey's *Chinese
Figure 3.1

John Wong-Quincey as drawn by Situ Qiao 司徒乔 for the 1935 Dagong bao 大公报 special issue on the play Weiqu qiuquan 委曲求全, Li Jianwu's translation of Wong-Quincey's She Stoops to Compromise.
China with anecdotes of "personality, literary style, career accomplishments, moral vision, personal habits, hobbies, sensibilities, and social behavior." In the portraits, all edited by Wen Yuan-ning but in some cases of unclear authorship, Rea notes, "Wen professed to have taken pains to balance his character sketches, so as to avoid flattery and malice. […] satirizing yet giving due credit, Wen expressed a writerly ethic of evenhanded entertainment." Yet this evenhandedness is not as evident in the sketch of Wong-Quincey, which is notably icy in tone:

Nothing out of the way in Mr. Wong-Quincey's personal appearance or ways. If we laugh at him at all, it is because he is so normal, so very correct in his conformation to everything that a good citizen ought to be. In fact, he is irritatingly normal. He is hygienically clean, in both the physical and moral sense. He is blameless as a husband. He is conscientious as a teacher. He is punctilious in all that relate to his duties as a senior member of the Tsing Hwa staff. He loves gardening. He is a good tennis player. He is a good shot. He takes an interest in football. He wears pants in summer, and long gowns in winter. He smokes a pipe. There is nothing outrageous in his house. Everything about him is as it should be. And yet, why is it that his friends poke fun at him behind his back? […] Success, respect, admiration may all be his due; but we shall sometimes pay him back with laughter, so long as he lacks the human touch.

The author of the portrait exercises special vitriol in describing Wong-Quincey's teaching at Tsinghua in a description that has been reproduced in later educational and theater histories to describe its subject: "Mr. Wong-Quincey is one of the most impulsive and enthusiastic men I have ever known. But his impulsive and enthusiastic side never shows up in the lecture-room. […] There is a sense of weary effort, and monotonous constraint. When the hour-bell strikes, Mr.

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286 Ibid., 15.
287 Wen Yuan-ning, ed., "Mr. John Wong-Quincey (王文显)," originally published June 21, 1934. Reprint in Wen, Imperfect Understanding, 58-9. As noted by Rea, the authorship of individual portraits in this series is not always clear, although all passed through Wen's editorship. Wen's analysis of Wong-Quincey's She Stoops to Compromise in this portrait is discussed later.
Wong-Quincey is glad to go away; and, I think, his students, too, reciprocate his feelings in the matter."288 Zhang Junxiang's description of Wong-Quincey's teaching is also often cited in describing how he invariably read from the same prepared lecture materials, however, "on thinking back, those materials were solid and sound, and for people coming into first contact with Western drama were an introduction to the fundamentals."289 Zhang also fondly remembered:

Tsinghua had an excellent custom and system that the faculty would assign numerous reference works and place them on a reference shelf, so that students every day after dinner would crowd at the door of the library waiting for the doors to open so they could be the fastest to grab the books they wanted to read. The students who took Wong-Quincey's two classes had to read at least once the important works of Shakespeare and the major histories of European and American theater. Beyond that, at the time the university had a large fund to purchase books. Professor Wong-Quincey himself researched drama, and every year would buy many materials ranging from theory of Western drama to theater arts to the scripts of well-known famous ancient and modern plays: everything you needed was there. So those of us who took an interest in theater had the opportunity to read many of these books.290

Wong-Quincey's courses on Western theater would influence a veritable who's who of playwrights, including most famously Cao Yu and Hong Shen, whose reputations would eventually eclipse his, while his plays are little-known today within China and virtually unknown

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288 Ibid., 58.
289 “回想起来，他那份讲稿倒是扎扎实实，对于初接触西方戏剧的人来说是个入门基础，" Zhang Junxiang 张骏祥, forward to Wang Wenxian juzuo xuan 王文显剧作选 [Selected Plays of John Wong-Quincey's Plays], 2.
290 “当时清华有个非常好的习惯和制度，就是教授要指定许多参考书，放 在参考书架上，学生每天晚饭碗一放，就挤在图书馆门口，等一 开门好进去疾足先得，抢到想看 的书。选了文显先生这两课，至少就得把莎士比亚主要剧作和欧美戏剧史的名著通读一遍。不仅如此，那时学校每年有一大笔钱买书。文显先生自己研究戏剧，每年也要 买不少戏剧书籍，从西洋戏剧理论到剧场 艺术到古代和现代名剧的剧本都应有尽有。所以我们这些对戏剧有兴趣的同学就有机会读到不少书，” ibid.
within American and Asian American theater history. Yet his plays of the late 1920s and their success in translation in the 1930s reward closer attention and being placed in relation to the works of his former students. In the American context, the reason the plays are understudied is partly archival in that only one English script, that of *She Stoops to Compromise*, remains accessible and then only in typescript. In the Chinese context, an additional factor was Wong-Quincey's cultural position as an Anglophone playwright. In one of his early publications while still a student Wong-Quincey, who had recently "created a sensation in University College, London University, by capturing the highest honors in Greek and in English," gave a lecture to the Chinese students association on the challenges of the Chinese language:

> Allow me first to make the remark that, as far as I know, this remarkable discrepancy between our written and spoken language is almost unique in the history of languages. […] One of three things must happen, and I am content to leave it to cleverer and better informed men to decide which is the best and most practical:—
> 1. We must speak in Classical Chinese.
> 2. We must write in Colloquial Chinese.
> 3. We must work out a compromise between the two extremes. […]
> The last alternative sounds more practical. We can retain the rhetoric, the beauty and the succinctness of our classics and incorporate them with our standard dialect thus producing a language which can be used as a channel for the expression of both written and spoken thoughts.

Here Wong-Quincey as a student in England speaking about "The Language Problem in China" in English to an audience of Chinese students was also characteristic of the table-turning of perspectives that would find expression in his plays *Peking Politics* (1927) and *She Stoops to Compromise* (1929) in the form of metatheatrical interventions.

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291 *Peking Politics* is available only in Li Jianwu's 1932 translation. Wong-Quincey's shorter plays have unfortunately been lost.
Shuang Shen has examined English as a Chinese language in Anglophone periodical publications of the 1920s and 1930s, finding that "[w]riting in English for Chinese writers has a kind of performative quality that mediates the distance between the stylistic and the political, the urban and the national," functioning as a "performance of the global in the local context." At *The China Critic*, where Wen Yuan-ning's "Intimate Portraits" were originally published, "the editors defined the goal of the magazine as performing a task of double translation: 'Although our publication is in a foreign language, and it would be most natural for us to devote our efforts to making China better understood by the outside world, we nevertheless consider our important mission not fulfilled without also making the outside world better known to our own people'." While Wong-Quincey's writings in English should be understood alongside this context of Anglophone periodicals studied by Shen and Christopher Rea, it should be with the difference that he wrote for a specific American audience.

Wong-Quincey spoke of his choice of language for playwriting in terms of audience and aim: "[B]y writing in English I wish to present to the West a real picture of Chinese as they are, and not as they are supposed to be. [...] What I desire is only to present a true picture of the Chinese with such slight modifications as will make them intelligible to Western audiences." It was Wong-Quincey's translator, Li Jianwu, who would bring his plays from their performances in the United States context into language and frameworks that found enthusiastic reception with Chinese audiences. As will be discussed, intersemiotic choices for staging were treated quite

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294 Shen, *Cosmopolitan Publics*, 43.
differently in the two cultural contexts to emphasize in America the "Chineseness" of the Wong-Quincey's plays and in China to stress the comedic excess of the playwright's satire of May Fourth ideals. However, in both instances, the effect was to distance the audience in the play's final moments to prompt a shift of perspective, a serious turn after the evening's comedy.

Reception in United States: *Peking Politics* (1927) and *She Stoops to Compromise* (1929)

In the late 1920s, George Pierce Baker would feature not one but two of Wong-Quincey's plays as major productions at the recently established Yale School of Drama (YSD). The first, *Peking Politics*, presented recent political and historical events in a thinly veiled form to dramatize the rebellion of Cai E 蔡锷 (1882–1916) when Yuan Shikai 袁世凱 (1859–1916) attempted to declare himself emperor in 1915. The second play, *She Stoops to Compromise*, satirized academic infighting at a college in Beijing. Both plays drew significant notice in their time before losing visibility within Asian American and intercultural theater history. The plays' original impact can be recovered to some extent thanks to archival documentation of their productions. Neither *Peking Politics* nor *She Stoops to Compromise* were made widely available as scripts or published, and the former play is now available only in a 1932 translation by Li Jianwu titled *Mengli jinghua* 梦里京华 (*The Capital in a Dream*, 1932).²⁹⁶ Two typescripts of *She Stoops to Compromise* were preserved: a script in the YSD archives that includes production annotations and a copy held at the New York Public Library that shows the play had agent

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²⁹⁶ For a recent analysis of *Peking Politics*, see Li Huichuan 李汇川, "Wenhua yinjiezhe de zige: Wang Wenxian yu Beijing zhengbian" 文化引介者的资格：王文显与「北京政变」[Qualified to Introduce a Culture: Wang Wenxian and *Peking Politics*], *Hanyuyan wenxue yanjiu* 汉语言文学研究 2017:1, 71-80.
representation from I. S. Richter. *She Stoops to Compromise* has been chosen for closer analysis in this chapter first because no copy of the English text of *Peking Politics* was available and second because of the popularity of the Chinese translation of *She Stoops to Compromise* analyzed later in this chapter. However, the performances of both plays are not only documented in production records at the YSD and contemporary news accounts, but also had influence through their use in pedagogy as discussed below.

**Peking Politics: "a modern play about modern China"**

*Peking Politics* was directed by Baker, who also developed a promotional campaign emphasizing the play's status as "the first effort in America by a Chinese playwright to present China to this country through the medium of the stage."297 Baker described the production, which was the fourth and final mainstage of the 1926–7 academic year, in these words:

Ever since China has been open to the West, numerous attempts have been made by foreigners to represent various aspects of Chinese life: missionaries, officials, tourists, and sensational writers of fiction have vied with each other to present a not altogether fair picture of the Chinese in literature and on the stage, with the result that, to most people, the Chinese have come to assume a certain fixed type that is sensational, depraved and grotesque. In 'Peking Politics,' however, an attempt will be made to present a vivid drama of the manners and customs of the Chinese people which may do much to overcome these preconceptions in the minds of the Western people.298

The claims made in the press for *Peking Politics* were not entirely accurate, but mostly so when it came to a semi-professional production of this scale. Chinese students in the United States, as discussed in Chapter Two, had been staging plays in English for their American peers, records of which can be found throughout the issues of the *Chinese Students Monthly*, with notable

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298 Ibid.
examples including Y. R. Chao's *The Hang Number Letter* and Hong Shen's *The Wedded Husband: A Realistic Chinese Play*, which was produced at the Ohio State University in 1919, and of course there were many active theaters in Chinatowns across the country. When Robin Noel Widgery surveyed 326 colleges and universities in 1966 about the history of Asian theater productions on their campuses, the earliest reported were in 1929, including Wong-Quincey's *She Stoops to Compromise* although not *Peking Politics*.

A reviewer for the *New Haven Register*, perhaps used to Baker's press releases, covered these claims to primacy with near mock-satirical force:

New Haven theaters have enjoyed many important 'first night' performances of far reaching interest, but perhaps none more notable than that which began when the curtain was raised in the Yale Theater last evening [...] This is a modern play about modern China, written by a 'modern' Chinese. Moreover, this is the first play written about modern China by a Chinese for American presentation—the first serious attempt by a Chinese to represent China to America through the medium of the stage.

The copy of this review retained in the YSD archive has a note appended in Baker's handwriting: "(ReWritten by a sob-sister)" (i.e., sentimental journalist), indicating some irritation at the rewording of his press release. The reviewer's recursive description around the terms modern, China / Chinese, and American, however, provides a window onto the mirroring enactments—the repeated turning of the tables—characteristic of the productions of Wong-Quincey's plays as well as their texts, which will be seen with *She Stoops to Compromise*.

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299 Y. R. Chao's play *Hang Number Letter* is available in Carton 32 Folder 2, Series 7. Personalia Subseries 7.2. Early writings and class notes, Chao (Yuen Ren) papers, BANC MSS 83/30 c, Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley. Hong Shen's *Wedded Husband* is discussed subsequently. See also Nancy Yunwha Rao, *Chinatown Opera Theater in North America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016), *passim*.


301 "First Modern Play About China By a Chinese Is Produced Here," *New Haven Register* (June 5, 1927).
Harold Helvenston, a classmate of Wong-Quincey who designed the sets for *Peking Politics*, would reproduce two settings in his textbook *Scenery: A Manual of Stage Design* to illustrate how "the same scenic unit may be reversed to suggest different scenes" in discussing how the stage designer considers directorial viewpoint and practical considerations "to create out of them an artistic and adequate background for the play."\(^{302}\) [Figures 3.2 and 3.3] Helvenston's terms of "artistic and adequate" echo Wong-Quincey's remarks about depicting "a real picture […] a true picture of the Chinese with such slight modifications as will make them intelligible." The "slight modifications" were significantly greater than the modest phrasing suggests, as the sets used in the production illustrate. In Halvenston's setting the sharply upturned eaves of the center arch, which is reversed front-to-back in the image from the later scene, signify the Chineseness of the setting. Dwarfing the actors and set against a massive sky cyclorama visible in Figure 3.2, the enormity of the scenic unit must have contributed to the sense of spectacle described by reviewer Roland Holt, whose review opened and closed on the notes, *"Peking Politics* is an unusually beautiful spectacle. […] Few plays at present on Broadway equal *Peking Politics* as a spectacle and many do not come up to it in interest."\(^{303}\) For Holt the spectacle seemed perhaps to undercut the radical potential intended by Baker, who "thinks 'Peking Politics' may do much to overcome wrong preconceptions of Chinese character, but most spectators will carry away a recollection of colorful melodrama, interlarded […] with bits of a strangely detached philosophy."\(^{304}\) The quality of detachment is often mentioned in the reception of Wong-Quincey's plays in both the American and Chinese contexts, as will be discussed later. What

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\(^{303}\) Roland Holt, "*Peking Politics,*" *New York Sun* (June 4, 1927).

\(^{304}\) Ibid.
Figure 3.2

John Wong-Quincey, *Peking Politics*, staged at the Yale School of Drama, 1927. RU397 Box 1, YRG-22-E Folder 1, Yale School of Drama Photographs and Posters.
Figure 3.3

John Wong-Quincey, *Peking Politics*, staged at the Yale School of Drama, 1927. RU397, Yale School of Drama Photographs and Posters.
Holt's review discovers about the dwarfing of the play by its setting appears to have been also evident to its author, who took a completely different generic direction in his next play, moving from the form of historical tragedy to that of satirical comedy.

She Stoops to Compromise: "Revolutions may be subdued, but have you ever heard of anybody suppressing a scandal?"

After returning to Beijing and Tsinghua University, Wong-Quincey completed She Stoops to Compromise, which was also produced at the Yale School of Drama under the direction of Alexander Dean in early November of 1929. A letter from Baker to Wong-Quincey noted "that he gave a reading of the play to his students. It was, as the newspapers say, punctuated with smiles and sometimes with laughter as he read, and there was general agreement that it is a decidedly good comedy, well sustained."305 The staging of two plays at the YSD by the same author was uncharacteristic, an honor usually reserved for Baker's most famous pupil, Eugene O'Neill. She Stoops to Compromise was also offered for public performance after the showings for an internal audience, as with Katherine Clugston's Finished, discussed in Chapter Two, and only one other play in the 1929–30 season, the contrasting No More Frontier: A Thoroughly American Play by Talbot Jennings.306

She Stoops to Compromise, which takes as its subject "the amusing intrigues of the faculty of a Chinese university," plays on the name of the Irish playwright Oliver Goldsmith's 1771 She Stoops to Conquer. Wong-Quincey's script shares with its namesake a small number of thematic elements, mostly the similarities of the play's protagonist Mrs. Wong to Goldsmith's

305 Quoted in "According to the Kuo Wen news Agency Prof. J. Wong-Quincey's latest play She Stoops to Compromise has won unqualified praise from Prof. G. P. Baker," The North-China Daily News (January 16, 1929), 10.
306 List, printed, of Productions in the academic year 1929-30, DRA37, Box 1, Folder 3, Yale School of Drama Archives, Yale University.
Miss Hardcastle, or Kate, who dresses as a servant in order to draw out the hidden personality of her suitor Marlow, who is "bashful and reserved" in the presence of women of his own class but brash and "impudent enough of all conscience" with those of a lower one. Kate, like Mrs. Wong, performs a role within a role, one more charming and seductive than the respectability of her everyday character would seemingly otherwise allow, and the play's conclusion hinges on Kate using this character to reveal Marlow's affection for her to their respective fathers: "He shall not go, if I have power or art to detain him. I'll still preserve the character in which I STOOPED TO CONQUER." Mrs. Wong in her role as a seductress distracts two school administrators who are threatening to dismiss her husband, the college treasurer, although she does this less for his affection than out of a fierce defensiveness of her family; it is Mr. Wong, like the husband in Robert Browning's "My Last Duchess," who can "choose / Never to stoop." While the plays share few other plot or character similarities, both utilize sharp and relentless comic dialogue with almost every statement cause for laughs, and also a character schema where no one—except Kate and Mrs. Wong—comes out of things looking good.

*She Stoops to Compromise* features a tautly plotted series of events each ending on a bold revelation, with the author playing throughout with the trope of characters eavesdropping on each other and in this way figuring an onstage audience in almost every scene of the play. The action is continuous within each of the three acts, without scene breaks, and the set changes only once, between Act II and Act III, from the reception room at the home of the college president to the college parlor. The cast includes ten main speaking roles—all except Mrs. Wong are school

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308 Ibid.
administrators or staff—and a small number of walk-on parts. The action opens with Mr. Koo, president of the college, in conversation with the college secretary, Mr. Ting, about how best to remove two of his juniors: Mr. Sung, the college registrar, who has been selling exam answers to applicants, and Mr. Wong, the college treasurer, an honest fool who is preventing Mr. Koo's ability to "manipulate the College accounts with any degree of freedom." Secretary Ting tries to dissuade the college president with the exhortation, "You know very well that you owe your long tenure of office to the fact that you have never dismissed a single member of the staff during all these years."309 The dialogue between the two sets up the self-interested world of the school, where all of the administrators form cliques and pursue intrigues against each other, changing sides whenever it seems in their interest.

TING: Can you tell me why the honest men are all fools and the clever ones are all rascals?
KOO: Yes, because the fools are not clever enough to be honest, and the scoundrels are too clever to be virtuous.
TING: Very appropriate sentiments for a college president.
KOO: We must accept things as they are. In the China of today politics has invaded every public institution. Do you think I can hold my job for five minutes if I don't play politics?310

The play thus opens with two actual scandals of administrators lining their pockets, neither of which will be resolved by the end as the characters become absorbed in a scandal of a different kind. Registrar Sung quickly conspires with President Koo's servant Loo Hai, who is also threatened with dismissal, to try to oust the president by blackmail. Enter Mrs. Wong, described as:

309 Wong-Quincey, *She Stoops to Compromise*, typescript, 5. The characters from the school's administration are all referred to as "Mr." within the script. In the following discussion I have used their job titles with surnames to distinguish the various roles.
310 Ibid., 7-8.
a striking woman of about thirty five. Commanding, handsome and yet charmingly feminine, there is a touch of cold calculating hardness about her which, however, she succeeds most of the time in disguising as feminine reserve. She is brilliantly and meretriciously dressed and made up in the very height of fashion and yet with such good taste that no one could mistake her for anything but a respectable married woman. She represents a type not infrequently found in middleclass life of a woman born and equipped for a higher sphere but irrevocably tied down to an insignificant husband whom she married out of her own choice, and to a large number of children, all of whom she delights to boss and to all of whom she is not unfaithful.\footnote{Ibid., 21-2.}

Mrs. Wong sets about charming President Koo in an attempt to avert her husband's dismissal. When appeals to her children's well-being are disregarded she offers a parrying, playful debate with President Koo on the merits of owning pets or raising children—"[C]aring for children is the only chance the average man or woman has for unselfishness and sacrifice. It is the average man's religion," she contends—before asking for an extension of Mr. Wong's appointment.\footnote{Ibid., 28.}

Rebuffed, Mrs. Wong resorts to open weeping: "Nobody understands me. \textit{[applies handkerchief to her eyes]} Nobody sympathises with me. \textit{[is about to cry]} Nobody pities me. \textit{[breaks down and weeps quietly].}"\footnote{Ibid., 39.} Mrs. Wong realizes that this will draw the servant Loo Hai, who has been reappearing importunately throughout the interview, into the room (bringing Registrar Sung with him) to discover the smitten President Koo with his arm around her.

Act II finds Registrar Sung and Loo Hai, who initially hold the upper hand in this scandal, outmaneuvered first by President Koo, who offers them both their jobs back if they will swear they were fishing at the time he was meeting with Mrs. Wong, and then
by Professor Kwan, who is angling to take President Koo's place and claims he can produce students to witness that they were not at the pond at the time in question.

KWAN: I respect you for your personal loyalty to Mr. Koo, but there is a higher object more worthy of our devotion. I mean this institution with whose welfare our own is identified. The reputation of this College is at stake. It is being endangered by the indiscreet conduct of Mr. Koo.

SUNG: If we are so anxious to preserve the fair name of this College, wouldn't it be much better to suppress the rumours? If Mr. Koo is convicted, we can purge the College of him, but it will leave a stain on the reputation of the school.

KWAN: Quite right, Mr. Sung, but you assume that we have the power of controlling rumours. Revolutions may be subdued, but have you ever heard of anybody suppressing a scandal?314

Mr. Wong is also introduced, as "the kind of person who mistakes peevishness for manly temper," and blusters about the dishonor to his wife. He is the only character in the play who refuses to "play the game" when President Koo likewise offers him continued employment. When President Koo arranges a meeting with the Wongs, Registrar Sung, and Loo Hai to ensure their alibis are straight, it turns out that Professor Kwan is lurking behind the bookcase to listen in and has a student stationed nearby to verify: "I was reading under a bush by the window. I also heard strange things. You were not dreaming, Professor Kwan."315

Act III takes place in the college parlor and depicts the investigation into the scandal conducted by Director Chang, who "looks more like a successful business man than an official of the old type" and is allied with Professor Kwan, who expects him to remove President Koo and instate himself. Indeed, Professor Kwan has scripted the entire day's interrogations, with Chang

314 Ibid., 67.
315 Ibid., 77.
greeting him familiarly by asking, "Hello, Kwan! Has everything been fixed? KWAN: Down to the last detail." The set in Act III is divided by a door onto an adjoining hallway revealing to the audience everyone who has been eavesdropping, which turns out to be almost everyone and a new servant character, Ma San, who becomes a singular onstage stand-in for the audience's reactions: "Ma San is evidently a man of considerable histrionic ability. His facial expressions and his silent gestures provide an eloquent commentary on what goes on inside the parlour." President Koo, Registrar Sung, and Mrs. Wong have each bribed Ma San to keep them informed and bring others to the scene at opportune moments, so that by the end of the act there is a pile-up of four characters listening at the door. Director Chang dispatches the witnesses until Mrs. Wong, in a replication of the first act, charms him into forgetting himself. When she reminds him to investigate her, he tries to get her to agree to having been compromised by the scandal with President Koo, but she will only agree so far as "that the position in which I was discovered with Mr. Koo was only compromising in appearance" rather than in fact:

MRS. WONG: Mark me, Mr. Chang. I have no illusion about the chastity of women, especially of women who are unsuitably married. All the sanctimonious talk about absolute purity for women is sheer humbug and masculine cant. As long as man is allowed to break his marriage vow with impunity a certain latitude must be conceded to woman. But I will admit that any departure from conventional virtue is more risky for woman than it is for man. Can you honestly believe that a woman of my sense and experience will waste my affection on a man like Mr. Koo?
CHANG: There is something in that. Go on, please.
MRS. WONG: We poor women are all hero-worshippers. We are made that way. We are born to worship the great, the strong, the wise, the successful of the opposite sex. Marry whom we may, we continue to worship the hero. Mr. Koo is very nice and all that, but he is not nearly great enough to be worth the risk.

316 Ibid., 84-5.
317 Ibid., 86.
318 Ibid., 105-6.
Moved by this logic and its apparent reference to him, Director Chang declares his love and asks for a token of what he assumes to be their understanding; Mrs. Wong kisses him once on each cheek, at which point the listeners at the door, including Mr. Wong, Professor Kwan, and Ma San, tumble into the room. The investigator Director Chang then assembles everyone involved in the investigation, which includes all of the major speaking roles in the play, and declares them one by one to be not at fault, including and especially Mrs. Wong, who is declared "a lady of the most exalted principles." When the disappointed Professor Kwan interjects, Chang dresses him down saying, "Mr. Kwan, if you had paid more attention to your teaching and spent less time in meddling with other peoples' affairs, your advancement would have been more rapid."319 Throughout the proceeding Chang is unaware, while the others are all uncomfortably so, that he has a large lipstick smear on each cheek. Kwan closes the play with the metatheatrical line:

KWAN: Mr. Chang, now that you have whitewashed everybody may I suggest that you go and wash your own face.

Mr. Chang is torn between indignation and a rising consciousness that something may be wrong. The rest of the company look at Mr. Chang's face and solemnly turn their heads away.320

While Peking Politics could be presented to the public as showing a positive and contemporary view of China to counteract the misguided portrayals in American plays on Chinese themes, or the "consistent misrepresentation of China, and the Chinese character, by foreign dramatists and writers," things were much more complicated with She Stoops to Compromise," subtitled "A Rollicking Comedy" and advertised to be "pure entertainment," which offered audiences by contrast a satirical and somewhat dark comedy of Chinese university life

319 Ibid., 114.
320 Ibid.
that pokes merciless fun at all of its characters.\(^{321}\) In a recent analysis Guan Feng argues that "two features of *She Stoops to Compromise* are worth noting: one is that there is not one 'good person' in the entire play, and each without exception makes small-scale machinations for their own benefit; the other is that selfishness is the greatest weakness of human nature."\(^{322}\) Wong-Quincey's choice of dark comedy would seem at odds with his stated aim to counter negative portrayals, but I would argue instead that *She Stoops to Compromise* was seeking the same ends as *Peking Politics* through a different method: rather than countering a negative portrayal with a positive one, Wong-Quincey used satire of Chinese university culture to create a sense of recognizable familiarity to the New Haven university audience while pulling back the curtain at the end to make the audience reflect on its enjoyment of the white performers masquerading as authentic Chinese types. The gesture was at once localizing and, especially in the final tableau, distancing. Wong-Quincey's art in balancing these aims can be seen further by the play also being accessible to Chinese audiences as a fair and hysterically amusing satire of university life: I will discuss the play translated in the Chinese context as a critique of the May Fourth view of education and also Mrs. Wong as an anti-heroine or a foil to Ibsen's Nora.

In addition to the negative portrayal of the self-serving characters, excepting the self-sacrificing Mrs. Wong, it is notable that the play has a quality of recursiveness and indeterminacy. Yang Ting points to the play's "repeating, contrastive structure," especially in

Acts I and III. As Hu Decai notes, "At the end, everything is resolved, yet everything is unresolved. Although the curtain falls, life returns to its previous state before the curtain rose. [...] The end of the play's plot is the beginning for the characters of the play to continue their lives outside the scope of the script. On the stage of life, this kind of farce must continue. The ending of the play is both an 'exclamation point' and 'ellipses.'" Oddly for a comedy, the play's many villains go unpunished, no one is fired, and other than the embarrassment to Director Chang, none of the characters is much the worse for the wear. An audience member at the 1929 YSD staging argued that the play should be given a more satisfactory ending:

[T]he playwright and the climax could be made more concrete with some specific emphasis upon a psychological, spiritual, or even ethnographical concept, which would bring the play definitely to a satisfactory close and still carry the thought of the hearers and spectators onward into expectancy of an interesting future for those people in the play who have just been seen to have been going through an interesting and very truly humorous series of events and one great, if also amusing crisis.

In Wong-Quincey's choice to end the play without this "specific emphasis," the playwright left the audience laughing but uneasy, instead of offering a pat moral or solution. The discomfort caused by the whitewashing line may be reflected in this audience member's desire for a more settled "ethnographical concept," or cultural lesson.

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323 "重复、对比的结构," Yang Ting 杨婷, "Wang Wenxian yu Qinghua xuepai shitai xiju de fazhan" 王文显与清华学派世态喜剧的发展 [John Wong-Quincey and the Development of the Qinghua School of Comedy of Manners], Qingnian wenxuejia 青年文学家, 2010: 07,14.
324 "最后，一切都解决了，但一切都没有解决。幕布虽然降下了，但生活又回到了开 帘 以前的原状。 [...] 剧本结尾是“惊叹号" 和“省略号”, 令人拍案叫绝，又 觉 余 味 无 穷," Hu Decai 胡德才, "Chaonong bu ke huijing: Lun Wang Wenxian de xiju Weiqu qiuquan" 嘲弄不可回敬: 论王文显的喜剧「委曲求全」 [Mocking that Can't be Answered Back: On John Wong-Quincey's Comedy She Stoops to Compromise], Zhanjiang shifan xueyuan xuebao 湛江师范学院学报 18:4 (December 1997), 70.
325 Audience report on She Stoops to Compromise, 4 pages, Box 69 Folder 172, YRG 22-B Series VII, Records of the Yale School of Drama, University Library, Yale Archives.
In the 1929 production of *She Stoops to Compromise*, special emphasis was given to the intersemiotic translation of its final stage direction, "Mr. Chang is torn between indignation and a rising consciousness that something may be wrong. The rest of the company look at Mr. Chang's face and solemnly turn their heads away." Handwritten notes, apparently those of the director Alexander Dean, on the back of the production script indicate the actors' relative positions:

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Ma Loo
Koo->(down) Chang diag. DR) Mrs
<-Ting
Sung-> Wong ->
<-Kwan
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Dean would use a picture of this arrangement of the play's concluding tableau in his widely-adopted 1941 textbook *Fundamentals of Play Directing*, in which form updated editions have appeared as recently as 2009. [Figure 3.4] In this context the scene from *She Stoops to Compromise* is used to illustrate two principles of composition, emphasis obtained through body position and through area, being "the rational arrangement of people in a stage group through the use of emphasis, stability, sequence, and balance, to achieve an instinctively satisfying clarity and beauty." By placing the group of characters in various body positions, Dean explains, the emphasis goes to the one facing front, here Director Chang. Of the mood of this scene, the staging depicts "[p]redominance of perpendicular straight line with form regular, deep, and scattered, expressing coldness, formality, and indifference." While the final moment of the play is striking, with the characters all turning their faces away from Director Chang, the intersemiotic translation of Dean's staging takes the effect further with a full body turn away so that their backs

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326 Wong-Quincey, *She Stoops to Compromise*, typescript, 114.
327 See copy of the typescript held at the Yale University Haas Arts Special Collections.
Figure 3.4

Act III, final scene of *She Stoops to Compromise* at the Yale School of Drama, 1929, as reproduced in Alexander Dean's *Fundamentals of Play Directing* to illustrate composition.
also are toward the hypocrite. The effect of stability within this arrangement is heightened by a divergence from the script's instructions for the set, with the arrangement for Act III changed to have listeners at two doors arranged symmetrically at each side instead of one door where the listeners all accumulated. [Figure 3.5] In place of the lopsided imbalance of the many listeners at one door, the staging again emphasizes symmetry. The "coldness, formality, and distance" described by Dean seem almost at odds with a reading of the play's madcap antics and frenetic comic dialogue, with a strong emphasis placed on the shifted tenor of the play's closing scene. *Fundamentals of Play Directing* does not go into detail on the narrative significance of this final tableau. An operative question becomes: was the emphasis in the 1929 staging on the didactic and revelatory gesture of the final line implicating the actors and the audience in their act of ethnic impersonation with "a rising consciousness that something may be wrong"? Or was it a distancing moment, a reminder of the play's foreign otherness through the stereotyped formality of the figures, several with bowed heads or a slight bow of the body in addition to the averted face?

The emphasis as preferred by the author was clear in the script, and may have been carried through to some of the American audience: the moment was meant to highlight the cross-cultural dressing and makeup of the actors, turning the tables to prompt the audience to reflect on their enjoyment of the cross-cultural comedy. The play's frequent scenes of overhearing and its overt placement of watching and listening characters illustrate the extent to which the play connects spectatorship to eavesdropping. This dynamic is underlined at the beginning of Act II when Registrar Sung and the servant Loo Hai congratulate themselves on having caught President Koo with Mrs. Wong: "SUNG: You did splendidly this morning. You ushered me into the room at exactly the right moment. We caught them in such a beautiful posture! (he imitates
Figure 3.5

Act III, John Wong-Quincey, *She Stoops to Compromise*, staged at the Yale School of Drama, 1929. RU397 Box 1, YRG-22-E Folder 41, 2 of 2, Yale School of Drama Photographs and Posters. Photograph is in a folder of unlabelled images marked "misc. productions, ca. 1930s."
The posture) LOO HAI: That wasn't difficult. I watched the scene from beginning to end through the keyhole."329 The students and the gardener drawn into the various intrigues are also instructed like actors in what to say or not to say, how to look and behave, as when President Koo instructs the gardener: "You go home and repeat that story to yourself until you know it perfectly. When you are asked what you were doing this morning, you say exactly what I have told you, word for word. I want the story to come freely from yourself."330

These metatheatrical gestures increase in Act III and are emphasized by repetition when Ma San is instructed in the part he is to play as an alternative investigator watching at the door. First Secretary Ting asks "Ma San, are you absolutely sure of the part we want you to play this morning?" and offers him a bribe; Professor Kwan pulls Ma San aside to make a similar request; and then the redoubtable Mrs. Wong outbids both of them while telling Ma San when to bring Mr. Wong in to make a scene. To all three offers Ma San gives the same answer: "I need nothing more to make me faithful." Then, in the play's only aside, Wong-Quincey gives him lines that might have come from Shakespeare: "Whom shall I serve? this? that? all three? That is a question!"331 Ma San's services rendered to three masters split the role of the listener at the door and make the servant a stand-in for the audience, more so even than the many other eavesdroppers in Acts I and II, bringing into high relief that what they are seeing is staged and calling into question their responses to it. The overall effect on the audience would be to prime them for self-reflection, a tendency heightened by the play's not offering a cozy moral, cultural lesson or justice served in the college's investigation.

329 Wong-Quincey, She Stoops to Compromise, typescript, 42.
330 Ibid., 61.
331 Ibid., 84.
This priming of the audience also takes place with regard to the tableau that ends Act III insofar as the two preceding acts also end with tableaus. After Act I, when Mrs. Wong and President Koo are discovered, the characters are described as, "Mr. Sung and Loo Hai stare in feigned surprise. Mrs. Wong looks embarrassed. Mr. Koo is dumbfounded." At the end of Act II, the effect is more pronounced when Professor Kwan dismantles the plans of President Koo to insulate himself from the scandal: "The faces of the company are glum and solemn. They register no other emotion. A satisfied and devilish smile distorts the features of Mr. Kwan." Both of these prepare for the closing of Act III and the striking moment when the actors are all instructed to turn their faces away from Director Chang at the final line. Thus the line about whitewashing would have been made visible and impactful to the audience. Looking back to Wong-Quincey's remark in 1914 about "why and how we have been able to endure the provoking process of analysis in silence," this moment shows a final turning of the tables to reverse the direction of that analysis.\textsuperscript{332}

Wong-Quincey's studies with Baker along with the productions of \textit{Peking Politics} and \textit{She Stoops to Compromise} invite comparison to the more famous Chinese student of Baker's, Hong Shen. While Hong's studies with Baker have the status of lore in Chinese theater histories, little was actually known about his playwriting in America until recently through the work of Man He and others who have brought back to light an archive from Hong's studies at the Ohio State University in 1916–19.\textsuperscript{333} Hong's \textit{The Wedded Husband: A Realistic Chinese Play} was

\textsuperscript{332} Research note: There was a subsequent United States production of \textit{She Stoops to Compromise} in Boston in 1930, but unfortunately the central record is a review on microfilm that is not currently available. See Figure 3.6.

\textsuperscript{333} Hong Shen audited Baker's 47 Workshop, a playwriting course at Harvard University, but there is no known record of public performances of his output there. Therefore, the archive at OSU is a better representation of his theatrical activities in the United States. Some of Hong Shen's correspondence with Baker is held at the Harvard Houghton Library.
Figure 3.6

Program to *She Stoops to Compromise* staged by the Footlight Club, Boston, 1930.
performed by students from the Cosmopolitan and the Chinese student clubs for an audience of some 1,300 people and "gained the distinction of being the first multiact English play written, staged, and published by a Chinese national." Based on a story by Bao Tianxiao (1876–1973) that had also been adapted by Mei Lanfang and by the Spring Willow Group, *The Wedded Husband* addresses the conflict between arranged marriage and marriage of choice as it follows the story of a young woman betrothed to a young man with mental illness. After he nurses her back to health during a plague and then falls prey to it, the young woman rejects a marriage with the man she loves to live in chaste memory of her deceased husband. As Man He discusses, the cast was interracial, with the men played by Chinese students and the women by white American students, noting that "The limited critical scholarship on *The Wedded Husband* has not addressed Hong's multicultural approach, focusing instead on the play's 'conservative' ending." Bringing plays like *The Wedded Husband* (1919) and Wong-Quincey's *Peking Politics* (1927) and *She Stoops to Compromise* (1930) into the narrative of *huaju's* development in the late 1910s through 1930s enriches our picture of cross-cultural theater in both the United States and China in these formative decades. A significant difference between Hong and Wong-Quincey lies in the path of their plays after returning to China. Hong would leave *The Wedded Husband* out of his narratives of early *huaju*, and his playwriting in China was notably different in style than this "realistic play," as witnessed by symbolic and expressionist works like *Yama Zhao* 赵阎王 (1922). In contrast, Wong-Quincey's plays written in America would travel

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335 See Man He, "When S/He Is Not Nora," for an analysis of *The Wedded Husband.*
336 Ibid., 79.
through translation to reach new audiences in Chinese.

_She Stoops to Compromise_ in Translation: Productions in China (1935–6)

In 1932 Li Jianwu, who studied with Wong-Quincey and was then his teaching assistant, translated _She Stoops to Compromise_ into Chinese with the hope of performing the play with a student group at Tsinghua University:

The [Tsinghua] theater society experimented every year with new plays, whether they were in Chinese, or in English; if we were not putting on a play at the time, we always found ways to invite troupes that were visiting the city to raise our classmate's interest. [...] If I can say something that is disrespectful, other than a small number of adapted translations, I had not at the time read a comparatively successful long play [in Chinese], whether in the subject, technique, writing, or the characterization. I knew our generation was only a start, that it was all preparation, that everything was waiting on the future. But, as I said, I am a bookworm, and fashionable things are not at all to my liking, only things that have comparatively high artistic merit. This is why I put my mind to finding a long play. [...] I sought the author's agreement for me to translate _She Stoops to Compromise_ into Chinese to reduce the practical difficulty [of finding enough actors to perform in English] and to increase the size and interest of the audience. I spent less than a month on the translation, rapidly translating _She Stoops to Compromise_, and, without waiting for the printed text to be ready, prepared to assign the supporting roles.  

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337 “戏剧社每年都用来试验新的剧作，无论是中文的，或是英文的，如果自己一时没有戏，总会设法邀来城里的团体，提高同学的兴趣 [...] 说句不恭敬的话，当时除去少数改译以外，我没有读到一出比较成功的长剧，无论在取材上，技巧上，字句上，人物的性格上。我知道我们的时代不过是一个创始，一切都是一个准备，一切都还等着未来。但是，我说过，我是一个书呆子，时髦的东西绝对打动不了我，而只有具有较高艺术价值的东西才能打动我。这就是为什么，我一心一意想物色一出长剧 [...] 我要作者同意，由我译成中文，减少实际的困难，增加观众的数量和兴趣。我用了不到一个月的时间，赶忙译出「委曲求全」，同时寻找油印出来，就预备分配角色。” Li Jianwu, "Wo jueding caiyong Weiqu qiuquan" 我决定采用"委曲求全" [I Decided to Choose _She Stoops to Compromise_], Huabei ribao 华北日报 (February 12, 1935), quoted in Zhao Guozhong 赵国忠, "Bu gai wangji Wang Wenxian he Weiqu qiuquan 不该忘记王文显和"委曲求全" [John Wong-Quincey (February 12, 1935), quoted in Zhao Guozhong 赵国忠, "Bu gai wangji Wang Wenxian he Weiqu qiuquan 不该忘记王文显和"委曲求全""]
The resulting translation, aptly titled *Weiqu qiuquan* 委曲求全, which can be back-translated as *Compromising in Part to Win the Whole*, was published by Beiping renwen shudian 北平人文书店 in July.338 As was the case with other *huaju*, the Tsinghua theater group had difficulty finding a woman to carry the role of the protagonist, Mrs. Wong, so the idea to stage *She Stoops to Compromise* was shelved for several years. Once it was performed publicly in 1935, *She Stoops to Compromise* was quickly heralded as a masterpiece.339 When Li came to translate *Peking Politics* almost a decade later, the national situation and the relationship between Li and Wong-Quincey had changed dramatically, as Li described in a reminiscence:

In the 'orphan island' period [after the Japanese had occupied Shanghai…] I often went to St. John's to visit Professor Wong-Quincey and his wife. Later on, when Shanghai was controlled by the enemy, I saw that the Wong-Quincey household was in a difficult financial situation, so I translated Wong-Quincey's *Peking Politics* and gave it to Hong Mo to direct. The play's title was changed to *The Capital in a Dream* (Mengli jinghua 梦里京华) […] Actors then could collect a performance tax, so every week I brought a briefcase to the theater to pick up the 6% performance tax and then gave it to Professor Wong-Quincey.340

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338 For Li Jianwu's comments on his translations of Wong-Quincey's plays, see ibid. and contributions to Wong-Quincey, *Selected Plays*.

339 See for example "Gudu huaju zhi yijuntuqi" 故都话剧之异军突起" [She Stoops to Compromise is the Capital's New Breakthrough] *Dagong bao* 大公报 (January 26, 1935).


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Translational theater: "It doesn't matter what language it was written in"

Li's 1932 translation of *She Stoops to Compromise*, while fluid and readily performable, is notable for its generally strict adherence to the English text. These qualities were discussed in an early review by Zhu Guanqian 朱光潛: "Mr. Li Jianwu has translated faithfully, and at the same time his style and tone completely follow Chinese patterns, making you forget that he is translating. Of especial value is that his translation is not merely translating a book. Each sentence of his translation expresses a theatrical sensibility—each sentence could be performed on the stage. This translation method is worth the careful consideration of theater specialists."  

In Li's translated text there are few additions, expansions, or even transpositions of the humor when the joke depends on an English idiom. For example, in the first act, Registrar Sung is trying to convince the servant Loo Hai to side with him in seeking to blackmail President Koo, but Loo Hai initially deflects by playing on the turn of phrase "to be in the same boat":

*Sung:* You know, Loo Hai, we are in the same boat.

*Loo Hai:* It's an honour to be in the same boat with Mr. Sung, but for the fact that the boat is sinking.

*Sung:* Sinking is not sunk. Why not let us join forces to keep us afloat?

Li translates the play on the boat metaphor directly:

宋先⽣：你知道，陆海，我们现在在⼀条船上。

陆海：同宋先生在一条船上再体面没有，可惜是船要沉了。

宋先⽣：“要沉”还不算沉。我们尽可以想法子把船撑起来。  

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342 Wong-Quincey, *She Stoops to Compromise*, 14.
Given this approach, with few if any adjustments to the text made for the Chinese-language audience, the translation can be described as at once interlingual between Chinese and English while also based on a translational original. This sense of an interlingual translation of a work that was already translational underlines how Wong-Quincey's play was written for an American audience in English but needed little adaptation for a Chinese one. An anonymous review that appeared in *Les Contemporains (Xiantai现代)*, the preeminent periodical for modernist poetry and fiction, praised Li Jianwu's translation as being as good or even better than a play written originally in Chinese: "What is even more unexpected is that after [Wong-Quincey's] play has been translated into Chinese, it does not reveal any places, whether in the relationships between the characters or the tone, where it is not in accord with things in this country … It doesn't matter what language it was written in, because we only need a good translation like this one that is written as completely as one written in our language."344 Some publications in the 1930s even credited Li alongside Wong-Quincey without differentiating which was the author and which the translator.

As a work of cross-cultural theater enthusiastically adopted by Chinese audiences, *She Stoops to Compromise* has sparked questions in later analysis about where it sits in the history of Chinese theater and whether it belongs. Most critics, including Tian Benxiang, argue that *She Stoops to Compromise* was foundational for longer works of comic huaju even if it has been underrecognized. Zhou Yuhan argues that scholars should keep in mind that the original audience Wong-Quincey had in mind was American, as part of an effort to fill in or reverse the

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344 "更是人意想不到的是, 他的作品译成了本国文之后, 无论在人情或语气方面, 却并不泄漏了什么不合国情的地方…至于用什么文字写却是没有关系的, 因为我们只要这样好的译本, 便跟用本国文字写完全一样," anonymous, review of *Wei qu qiu quan* 委曲求全 [She Stoops to Compromise], *Xiantai现代* [Les Contemporains] 2:2 (1932), 345-7.
treatment of China as a "blank screen": "In the early 20th century, in the eyes of foreign artists and playwrights, China was extremely useful as a blank screen for expression, therefore different cultures all tried imaginatively to fill in the outlines and add embellishments." As Li Huichuan emphasizes, though, the play was also clearly significant to its doubled Chinese audience: "The extraordinariness of Wong-Quincey's playwriting lies in how he attempted to provide an introduction for his ideal audience—for Western people who have biased views about China and Chinese people, to show what he thought to be the appearance of Chinese people. At the beginning of the 20th century when Chinese and Western cultures where sharply colliding, in the period when Chinese modern theater was beginning to sprout, this writing attempted to contain a double literary and cultural significance." This double significance, what I would describe as the accessibility of the play to audiences in the United States and China alike, reflects its status as a translational work.

This doubledness appears also at the level of the sets, as Zhang Jian suggests: "Just like that kind of more or less 'nondescript and ill-assorted' combination of Chinese and Western furnishings and decor in President Koo's home, the entire play cannot be seamless or not leave the cracks and fissures showing between Western forms and Chinese action." Wong-Quincey's

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345 二十世纪初期，在国外的文艺或戏剧创作者看来，中国就是一个极具表现力的空白荧幕，于是不同的文化都努力将自己的想象加以勾勒修饰，再呈现在这块中国荧幕上,"Zhou Yuhan 周昱含, "Xifang wenhua dui zaoqi Zhongguo xiju chuangzuo de yingxiang shenglüe gongxian yi Wang Wenxian de Weiqu qiuquan wei lie" 西方文化对早期中国喜剧创作的影响省略贡献以王文显的「委曲求全」为例" [The Overlooked Contribution of Western Culture as an Influence on Early-Period Chinese Comedy: Wang Wenxian's She Stoops to Compromise as an Example], Weixing dianshi yu kuandai meiti 卫星电视与宽带多媒体, 2019:14, 111.

346 王文显戏剧创作的特出之处在于，他试图以一个引介者的姿态，向他所预设的理想观众——对中国和中国人有着偏颇之见的西方人，展示他所认为的中国人的样貌。在中西文化激烈碰撞的20世纪初，在中国现代戏剧萌生初绽之际，这样一种写作尝试所蕴含的文学与文化上的双重意义," Li Huichuan, "Qualified to Introduce a Culture," 80.

347 正像顾校长家里那种多少‘不伦不类’的中西结合的摆设布置一样，全剧在西方戏剧的形式和中国世态的实体之间还未能做到天衣无缝，不落痕迹。" Zhang Jian 张健, "Lun Zhongguo
description of the set—"The furniture is in modern European style, comfortable but somewhat nondescript and ill-assorted. The pictures, ornaments, tablecloths, etc. are Chinese."—belongs to a line of similar huaju set descriptions going back to Hu Shi’s 1919 Greatest Event in Life, where the single extended scene takes place in a Westernized Chinese home, with the author carefully noting that the decorations include both Chinese calligraphy and Dutch landscapes. In both instances the trope of the combined Western and Chinese elements mirrors huaju as an intrasemiotically translated form, with the alteration in Wong-Quincey's case of an ironic messiness: "nondescript and ill-assorted." In this Wong-Quincey in She Stoops to Compromise questions the cleanness of how huaju is so often taken to be an example of Western form and Eastern content, opting instead as a translational work for turning the tables on its doubled audience, or what Li Huichuan calls "double literary and cultural significance."

Where Li Jianwu's translation of She Stoops to Compromise does diverge slightly at the word level from Wong-Quincey's text, the effect is most often to add metatheatrical gestures. For example, in Act I Li translates the line "We must do our best! otherwise we are lost!" as "不湊力量，你得拼命! 不然我們就坍台!" (Don't just do your best, you have to try desperately! otherwise we will fail! [literally: otherwise the stage will collapse!]." In Act III when the curtain has just risen on the new setting of the college parlor, "plainly furnished in foreign style," Secretary Ting opines in English, "I don't feel quite happy about the new alibi," whereas the character in Chinese says, "我对于新换的地点不觉得怎么又把握" ("I don't feel quite happy about this new place [i.e., the new set])." The only notable change for the new audience in Chinese is that at the end Li's translation does not attempt to transfer the word whitewashing or

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*xiandai youmo xiju de shitaihua* 论中国现代幽默喜剧的世态化 [On the Comedy of Manners Genre within Chinese Modern Comedic Humor], *Xiju yishu* 戏剧艺术 1998:6, 62.
its condemnation, instead focusing the play's final lines on the censure of how Director Chang has cleared everyone while avoiding having to clean house:

关先生：张先生，现在你既然把人人都洗刷干净，情准我提醒你一声，去把你自己脸也洗个干净。

Kwan: Mr. Chang, now that you have scrubbed everybody else clean, may I suggest that you go and wash your own face. [back-translation]

At least two contemporaneous reviews suggest in quoting the play differently that the line—"now that you have whitewashed everybody, may I suggest that you go and wash your own face"—may have been altered in performance, however, to be closer to the English original:

你把每个人都洗清白了，而为何不洗洗自己的脸呢?  

你把所有人都洗刷清白，可是你自己就不洗自己的脸了！

Regardless, when the play was performed in China, the focus of the scene became the scarlet lipstick marks on Director Chang's face rather than the turning away of the characters in the final stage direction. Reviews and reminiscences focused on how the effect was created without requiring the characters to kiss, which would have been scandalous on stage; in some productions they would pretend to kiss behind the sofa back while the actor playing Mrs. Wong would smear the lipstick on the face of the character playing Director Chang. Production stills from the performances in China feature the characters all staring at Director Chang, rather than on their turning away as captured in Dean's textbook. [Figures 3.7, 3.8, 3.9] The focus on the

348 Quoted in "Weiqu qiuquan Beiping chuci gongyan yinxiang" 委曲求全北平初次公演印象 [Impressions on the First Performance of She Stoops to Compromise in Beiping (Beijing)], Yishi bao 益世报 (February 17, 1935).
349 Quoted in Zhongzi 仲子, "Weiqu qiuquan shuping (san)" 委曲求全述評（三）" [Review of She Stoops to Compromise (Part 3)], Dagong bao 大公报 (April 26, 1935).
350 See for example Fengzi and Zhang Junxiang's memoirs of the production.
Figure 3.7

Acts I and III of *She Stoops to Compromise* (*Weiqu qiuquan* 委曲求全) performed by the Beiping Youth Theater, 1935, *Juxue yuekan* 剧学月刊 4:2, 2. The lower picture depicts the final scene of the play. Li Jianwu, the play's translator, is fourth from left.
Fig 3.8

Act III, another example of the final scene of *She Stoops to Compromise*, Jiao Tong University, Shanghai, 1936. *Jiao Da huaju tekan* 交大话剧社特刊.
Figure 3.9

Act III, final scene of *She Stoops to Compromise*, Shanghai Theater Arts, 1940.
visible marks of scandal preoccupied the audience, in keeping with the interpretations, discussed below, of the play as a scathing satire of May Fourth cultural ideals.

**Performances in Beijing and Shanghai: "modern drama urged fervently"**

In 1935 the Beipi [Beijing] Youth Troupe 北平青年会剧团 approached Li Jianwu to direct a production of the translation for which he also played the role of Director Chang. Lin Huiyin (see Chapter Two) contributed to the sets and costumes. [Figure 3.7] After the first three performances at the auditorium of the Beijing Union Medical College, the cast and crew fell ill and the performances at Tsinghua University were delayed until April; the well-known actor playing Mrs. Wong, Ma Jingyun 马静蕴, passed away and was replaced by Shi Zhicong 石之琮 for the performances at Tsinghua. As noted in an overview of the productions published shortly afterward in *Theater Studies Monthly (Juxue yuekan 剧学月刊)*, the troupe only succeeded in staging five performances total, indicating both the difficulty and the necessity of amateur productions as a precursor to a professional *huaju* theater. However, as with other *huaju* performances in the genre's pre-professional stage, the level of enthusiasm and cultural discussion generated had an outsize impact. The newspaper *Dagong bao 大公报* devoted two days of full-page coverage to the play on February 9 and 10, including essays by Yu Shangyuan, Zhang Junxiang, and the review of the published script by Zhu Guangqian.

The February 9 page includes one of Wong-Quincey's few extant reflections on theater in China in the essay, "All of the Reasons Modern Chinese Theater Lags Behind" (*Xiandai Zhongguo xiju luohou yuanyin zhongzhong 现代中国戏剧落后原因种种*). The main drawbacks that Wong-Quincey notes are the relative inexperience of playwrights in *huaju*; the challenges for theater as the synthesis of all arts whereas a novelist needs only the printer's art; and the lack
of a commercial *huaju* theater when even in Western countries theater is an investment gamble. Notably, Wong-Quincey also argues that *huaju* is not in competition with classical theater (*xiqu*) because they are distinct art forms with different audiences. The reason Wong-Quincey analyzes in greatest detail is the lack of progress following a model of modern theater developing in stages on the basis of translation:

Following foreign influence, the development of modern Chinese theater will involve three phases:

1) translation

2) adaptation of translations

3) creation

Translation requires a specialized knowledge of foreign languages, along with a wide knowledge of foreign theater. Selecting appropriate plays to translate is a major question. Even today, the work of translating foreign plays still has not yet reached a satisfactory point. Even Shakespeare has not been satisfactorily translated into Chinese.

Adapting translated plays requires an appreciative ability, and an understanding of Chinese and foreign customs and psychology. If we take a foreign play and only change the names of the characters and places to Chinese ones, that doesn't count as adaptation.

For us to have creation of scripts, our playwrights must have a wide-ranging knowledge and talent. Talent is especially necessary.

The only remedy for the four shortcomings just mentioned is to establish modern Chinese drama and modern Chinese theaters attached to

1) colleges and universities
2) experimental theaters
3) professional theaters

[...]
The modern drama urged fervently here is hardly to be hoped for in China at present. Even small-scale financial assistance to establish theater departments at Chinese
universities is not possible to obtain. The spirit of the times is not conducive. Why should money be spent on theater, if other more important activities need financial support? But, why do we establish the study of pure and applied science, law, medicine, social science, and even foreign languages and literatures? Isn't it with the goal of China's modernization? Then I ask at present what important civilized nation does not have its modern theater? [...] How long will it be until China has a modern theater in keeping with its culture, with the brilliance of its thought and art?

The model of huaju's development posited here by Wong-Quincey takes place as a series of translational stages. Although Wong-Quincey was pessimistic about the achievement of these stages in contemporary China, we can see that the range he describes of translation, adaptation, and creation in many ways maps first the more literal interlingual-intersemiotic translation of scripts and manuals of the "amateur theater," as discussed with Chen Dabei and his

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351 利用外来势力，发展现代中国戏剧，有三种步骤：
（甲）翻译，
（乙）改译
（丙）创作。
翻译需要一种外国语言的专门知识，同一种外国戏剧的广大的认识。选择正当的戏剧来翻译，是一样大问题。直到如今，翻译外国戏剧的工作还没有做到令人满意。甚至于莎士比亚也还没有好好地译成中文。
改译要求赏鉴[?]力，以及一种中外风俗心理的瞭解。我们要是拿一出外国戏，仅仅把人名地名换成中国的，那还不算改译。
我们要有创作我们的作家必须具有广大的认识与天才。天才尤其非要不可。
方才所说的四项缺陷，唯一的挽救是：附设现代中国戏剧与现代中国剧院
（甲）于学院与大学，
（乙）于实验剧院
（丙）于商业剧院
[…]
那样慷慨地鼓励现代戏剧，在目下中国，是毫无指望。甚至于少量地捐助，在中国大学建设戏剧系，也不能办到。时代的精神不大顺利。为什么要把钱花费在戏上，如若其他更重要地活动需要援助？但是，为什么我们设立纯粹与实用科学，法律，医学，社会科学，甚至于外国语言以及文学的研究？若不是为了中国现代化地目的？请问目下有任何重要的文明国家，没有他现代的戏剧？[...] 中国要多久才有现代戏剧，配的上她的文化，她的理智与艺术的才分？" John Wong-Quincey, "All of the Reasons Modern Chinese Theater Lags Behind" [Xiandai Zhongguo xiju luohou yuanyin zhongzhong 现代中国戏剧落后原因种种.] Dagong bao 大公报, February 9, 1935: 11.
contemporaries; then the freer adaptation of the intersemiotic modelling and localization of "the modern" seen with Lin Huiyin; and finally the creation of translational theatrical works by Wong-Quincey himself. Importantly, too, Wong-Quincey stresses that theater is as crucial as other disciplines, from science to languages, promoted in the May Fourth movement as vehicles to move modernization forward.

Following the enthusiasm around the Beijing Youth Theater Troupe's production, *She Stoops to Compromise* in Li Jianwu's translation was performed widely in 1935 and 1936. Two Shanghai-based productions deserve special attention: that of the Fudan Theater Society and the production staged to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of Jiao Tong University. The Fudan Theater Society was an established group—*She Stoops to Compromise* was its eighteenth production performed to celebrate its tenth anniversary—comprised of actors affiliated with the university supported by a professional director, Ying Yunwei 应云卫, and advisers drawn from professional theater, including Ouyang Yuqian. The role of Mrs. Wong represented the debut of Feng Jiren 封季壬 (1912–96) 谁取了舞台名 Fengzi 凤子 [Figure 3.10]. Fengzi would become a well-known actress and in subsequent decades a theater critic alongside her spouse, the translator Sidney Shapiro. She would later write about how the production marked an important stage for *huaju* in moving toward larger, commercial theaters because of the play's staging at a popular cinema: "*She Stoops to Compromise* at that time being performed at the Carleton Movie Theater was the first step of *huaju* being performed in theaters," whereas before this spoken drama plays were staged at campus auditoriums or meeting halls without stages.352

352 Fengzi 凤子, "Shanghai yanqu Weiqu qiuquan de diandi huiyi" 上海演出'委曲求全'的点滴回忆 [A Few Memories of Performing *She Stoops to Compromise* in Shanghai], *Xin wenxue shiliao* 新文学史料 1984:2.
Figure 3.10

Fengzi 凤子 (Feng Jiren 封季壬), who portrayed Mrs. Wong in the Fudan Company *She Stoops to Compromise* and wrote reminiscences about the production, in 1935.
In several memoirs about the production, Fengzi also speaks about the challenge of the role of Mrs. Wong. The seductive character was foreign to her previous life as a sheltered student in several respects: for the role, she needed to learn to walk in heels, smoke, and, as emphasized by Ying, "to use all of the artifices of femininity to manage all of the men, and at the same time to hold on to the position of my husband [in the play]."\textsuperscript{353} In addition, Fengzi needed to learn to speak \textit{guoyu} 国语, the official national language, for the role. Fengzi would originate the role in Shanghai and later be invited to play Mrs. Wong with the group that presented the play the next year for the fortieth anniversary celebration of Jiao Tong University. She would come to see how in the role of Mrs. Wong the actor was used as an advertisement not just for the play, but also for \textit{huaju} as a commercializing form: "Afterward I realized that performing this woman protagonist was performing a role, in order to fight for a better day. To be treated as an advertisement, as a student, shows the difficulty that the old society caused for \textit{huaju}. Where were there any theaters at the time that specialized in performing \textit{huaju}?"\textsuperscript{354} An advertisement from when Fengzi played Mrs. Wong in the Jiao Tong University placed the character as controlling not only her environment at the college, but also the entire globe. [Figure 3.1] By the context of this 1936 performance in Shanghai, with China facing increasing incursions from Japan, the question of compromise made in order to overcome was playing out on the international stage as well as that of \textit{huaju}.\textsuperscript{355}

\textsuperscript{353} "他要我运用女性的一切手段，要弄出所有的男人，同时抱住丈夫的位置," ibid.
\textsuperscript{354} "事后我才明白这是拉女主角亮相，为了争取租到好的日期。作为学生竟被当作招牌挂出去，可见旧社会搞话剧的艰辛，当时哪有专门演话剧的园子呢？," ibid.
Figure 3.11

Program for *She Stoops to Compromise* as performed at Jiatong University Fudan Company, Shanghai, 1935. John Wong-Quincey and Li Jianwu are credited as coauthors.
Any strong female lead in *huaju* would naturally be compared to Ibsen's Nora from *A Doll's House* and also Yamei from Hu Shi's *Greatest Event in Life*. A review of *She Stoops to Compromise* by Lin Yiping 林一屏 connected the character of Mrs. Wong to Nora in terms of the sacrifice she commits for her husband Torvald, asking whether we should stoop to compromise in order to accommodate society, as Mrs. Wong does, or instead make society accommodate us.\(^{356}\) Kwok-kan Tam has recently analyzed the numerous productions of *A Doll's House* in 1934–35, so many that 1935 came to be known as the "Year of Nora": "Every time there was a performance of *A Doll's House*, promotional stories and debates would appear in journals and newspapers. The media promotion of Ibsen reflected the reading public’s interest in Ibsen and the fact that more and more women were interested in liberation from family bondage."\(^{357}\) These productions and the many plays and works of fiction written in response, or as sequels, can be seen to include Lin Huiyin's *Meizhen and Them*, as discussed in Chapter Two, with Meizhen's dilemma among possibilities for an arranged marriage and a marriage of choice.

Tam argues that the central five features of theater as a public sphere in modern China included both "the rise of a Western-style performance culture in Shanghai and Beijing, which represented a much-valued new lifestyle for the modern educated Chinese," and "the great influence of Ibsen’s Nora among Chinese youths."\(^{358}\) Tam further connects the influence of the Nora paradigm beyond the social influence of young people leaving their family homes to the willingness of young people across the country to leave home for Mao Zedong's Communist base at Yan'an.

\(^{356}\) Lin Yiping 林一屏, "Weiqu qiuquan de shidai Beijing" "委曲求全"的时代背景 [She Stoops to Compromise's Time Setting], *Minbao* 民报 (June 7, 1935), 8.


\(^{358}\) Ibid., 35.
In this context Mrs. Wong would have presented a significant contrast to Nora and Yamei from her first description in the stage directions as "a woman born and equipped for a higher sphere but irrevocably tied down to an insignificant husband whom she married out of her own choice, and to a large number of children, all of whom she delights to boss and to all of whom she is not unfaithful." Wong-Quincey wrote to Li Jianwu in advance of the 1935 Beiping Youth Theater production emphasizing that the whole play is carried by Mrs. Wong, who occupies a position of superior knowledge to the intrigues of the other characters: "The three important roles in the play are Mrs. Wong, President Koo, and Director Chang. Mrs. Wong is especially important. The play is for 'her': she holds the whole play; the success or failure of what comes afterward depends on whether she acts it well or poorly. [...] She is the only person who knows what she wants, and who gets what it is that she wants. She is the only person who knows how the whole play will end." The emphatic decision of Mrs. Wong to stay with her family, the clear joy she takes in managing the family's life at the college, and her fierce defense of Mr. Wong, for all his blustering Torvald-like ineptitude, inevitably made Mrs. Wong an anti-Nora figure and popular anti-heroine for contemporary audiences in China. Since, in May Fourth discourse, Nora and Hu Shi's Yamei represented the idealized "new woman" figure who breaks away from traditional family structures and also symbolizes the modernizing nation, for Chinese audiences in 1935 and 1936 Mrs. Wong presented an iconoclastic alternative, both conservative and radical in the setting of satire.

359 "因为选择女演员，作者写信给我，特别提醒我道：‘这里有三个主要的人物，是王太太，顾校长和张董事。王太太尤其重要。戏是为‘她’的；她主有全剧；后者的成败全看她演作的好坏。……她是唯一的人，知道她需要什么，而且得到她需要的东西。她是唯一的人，知道全剧如何结束，’ Li Jianwu, "I Decided to Choose She Stoops to Compromise," 45.
Conclusion: Education and Modernist Detachment

Wong-Quincey's comic portrayal of the intrigues and immoralities of university administrators also found an eager audience in the mid-1930s. This is signally evident in the production staged at Shanghai's Jiao Tong University in 1936 to celebrate the school's fortieth anniversary. A commemorative booklet included not only articles on and by those involved in the production and the actors, including Fengzi, but also six pages of choicey comic dialogue from the play, another two pages of quotes showing "Who Gets Scolded the Most in She Stoops to Compromise" (Weiqu qiuquan shei zui aima 委曲求全谁最挨骂), and comic drawings scattered throughout illustrating lines from the play. The university community embraced, and its leadership tolerated, the play's madcap criticism of academic administration with good humor, although with reminders such as that in the included essay from Li Jianwu that She Stoops to Compromise was a lesson as well as a comedy:

While you are laughing, aren't you also feeling a keen pain, a hidden ache in the heart? Think about your countless compatriots coming out of a university like this Chongda [in the play], living today like we see performed onstage, and it reminds you why our nation is not strong enough, simply because there is a factor needed for success—education—that has been undermined [literally: had the stage dismantled under it]. This shocks you, doesn't it? A light-hearted comedy can help expose for you the essential conditions needed for founding a nation. [...] Is there here one character who faithfully engages in education? Who educates for the sake of education?360

360 “发笑的时候，你能不有点儿切肤之疼，锥心的隐疼？想想你有无数司胞走出这样一个崇达大学，如今活活搬上舞台，提醒你为什么我们国势不成，都只因为有一个成功的要素—教育—半路拆台。这吓你一跳，不是吗？一出无足轻重的喜剧，会帮你揭露立国的基础条件。 [...] 这里有一个人忠实从事于教育？是为教育而教育？” Li Jianwu 李健吾, "Weiqu qiuquan de yi ge yiyi "委曲求全” 的一个意义 [One of the Meanings of She Stoops to Compromise], Jiaotong huaju tekan 交大话剧社特刊 (1936), 26-7.
Wong-Quincey of course understood the critique of education as well as any of his audience, having observed its course first-hand since 1917, when he could write, "The cause of modern education in China has enjoyed continuity of aim and progress which distinguishes it from less determined movements and reforms. In spite of opposition, checks, and adverse circumstances, the new education has rapidly advanced […] In the short space of eight years the number of schools and the students attending them, have multiplied by thirty times, revealing an average increase of nearly four hundred per cent per annum. Comment on these facts will only detract from their eloquence."\(^{361}\)

Li's essay for the Jiao Tong University production engages with an effect of performance described in many of the contemporaneous reviews of *She Stoops to Compromise*: of laughter or enjoyment disrupted by uncomfortable reflection, creating an impression of detachment on the part of the audience members. This detachment is often attributed to the playwright as being indifferent or unfeeling, for example in Li's comment in the same essay that "the author looks coldly at the world" ("作者冷静眼世界"). Reviewers even in America noted this same quality in Wong-Quincey's plays, from Holt's description of *Peking Politics* "strangely detached philosophy," to H. T. P.'s similar comment on detachment in the *Boston Transcript* review of *She Stoops to Compromise*.\(^{362}\) It was this quality of detachment as well that was featured in the most lasting critique of Wong-Quincey found in Wen Yuan-ning's portrait:

> Mr. Wong-Quincey has been consecutively Professor, Dean, Vice-President and Acting President of Tsing Hwa College. Since Tsing Hwa's status has been raised to that of a University, Mr. Wong-Quincey has become Chairman of the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature. It speaks much for his ability and prestige, that there has never

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\(^{362}\) The English original of H.T.P.'s review was unavailable at time of writing, but the phrase is retained in English in Li Jianwu's translation as "detachment"; see Wong-Quincey, *Selected Plays*, 171.
been any trouble in his Department during all these years of "storm and stress." […]
A few years ago, one of Mr. Wong-Quincey's plays, She Stoops to Compromise, was produced in Peking. The farce was excellent, the technique was perfect, the acting was good. There was not one dull moment in the whole play. Altogether it was a brilliant success. Everything that hard work and dramatic scholarship and ingenuity could do to make the play a good show was in She Stoops to Compromise. But when the applause was over, and the lights were out, and we were out once again in the open street, rushing about for our cars and our rickshaws, why was it that there arose in many of us a feeling of resentment, almost against the author? Is it not because Mr. Wong-Quincey has given us everything in She Stoops to Compromise, except the one thing needful—the something human? Yes, we miss that; and missing that, we are dissatisfied with Mr. Wong-Quincey.363

The satire of Wong-Quincey here also knowingly places him in the role of the administrators parodied in She Stoops to Compromise, like President Koo as described by Secretary Ting: "You know very well that you owe your long tenure of office to the fact that you have never dismissed a single member of the staff during all these years." Li Jianwu, in an afterward to the 1932 translation of Peking Politics, noted that Wen's criticism of the play was joined by Hu Shi after reading the accounts in Dagong bao. In Li's view, "The truth of the matter should not be sought outside of the work itself [She Stoops to Compromise]; disagreement over personal affairs frequently harms our impartial understanding. Well-known people [like Wen and Hu] are not entirely without their biases […] What I can say is only that Wong-Quincey is not unfeeling, at the least that is what reading one after another of his long and short works tells me."364 More fundamental than the personal issue for Wen and Hu, though, was Wong-Quincey's satire of the May Fourth's ultimate ideal of education, both through the undermining of the Nora-Yamei

363 Wen, ed., "Mr. John Wong-Quincey (王⽂显)," 59.
364 “其实，真正的是非不应当在作品以外寻找，那些人事上的纠纷往往妨害我们认识上的公正。大人物不一定没有偏见 […] 我所能够说的，仅仅是王文显先生并不冷酷，至少我陆续读到他的长短作品这样告诉我,” Li Jianwu, Afterword to Peking Politics, 173.
idealism and the play's comic portrayal of the inveterately corrupt university administrators. As Li Huichuan has pointed out, "A suitable distance for measuring things, after all, was the common aim that participants in early period [i.e., early huaju] theater activities, whether intentional or not, were exploring." We can go a step further to say that this detached humor and its turning of the tables is part and parcel of the modernist self-reflexivity that characterizes Wong-Quincey's writing for theater.

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365 "适合的尺度”究竟为何．是早期戏剧活动参与者们中有意或无意共同探索的目标," Li Huichuan, "Qualified to Introduce a Culture," 79.
Epilogue: Distance for Appreciation

In 1935, the "Year of Nora" for Chinese huaju discussed in Chapter Three, Mei Lanfang 梅兰芳 (1894–1961) famously gave acting demonstrations from the Jingju repertoire in Moscow. These provided Bertolt Brecht (1899–1956) with a catalyst for his theorization of the Verfremdungseffekt, the alienation or distancing effect. Many aspects of the epic theater's style of production were well developed by this point, yet Brecht was still searching for ways to define the acting style that the epic theater required. Although later criticisms of Brecht's interpretation of Mei Lanfang's performances have focused on points of creative misunderstanding, the episode provides an important intercultural nexus for the comparative study of theater in the modernist period. At much the same time, the playwright Cao Yu 曹禺 (1910–96), a former student of John Wong-Quincey, published a lesser-known manifesto that accompanied the first edition of his enormously popular and influential 1935 huaju play Thunderstorm (Leiyu 雷雨). In this preface Cao Yu proposed a relationship of theatrical production to audience that would provide "distance for appreciation" (xinshang de juli 欣赏的距离), a formulation that scholars of Chinese theater such as Yuwen Hsiung have found strikingly similar to Brecht's Verfremdungseffekt. This is the sort of convergence that unsettles narratives about the timing

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and directionality of modernism, especially given that Cao Yu—whose trilogy of plays written between 1935 and 1937, *Thunderstorm, Sunrise (Richu ⽇出)*, and *The Wilderness (Yuanye 原野)*, would cement his place as the foremost huaju playwright of the first half of the twentieth century—was writing in the theatrical genre that had emerged and developed in the early 20th century in response to increasing exposure to the Western stage or more precisely, as I have argued in this dissertation, as an intrasemiotic translation of the Western realist stage. Cao belonged to the first generation of Chinese playwrights to grow up fully assimilated to the notion of a dialogue-based dramatic form, having participated in amateur and huaju productions from his adolescence through his graduation from Tsinghua University in 1934.

In this epilogue, I will discuss Cao Yu's formulation of "distance for appreciation"—and its translation—as a turning point for huaju to bring a close to the narrative of Chen Dabei's interlingual-intersemiotic translations of amateur theater, Lin Huiyin's intersemiotic modelling of the modern in stage settings, and John Wong-Quincey's translational metatheatrical gesturing toward both American and Chinese audiences at once.

In "Chinese Modernism, Mimetic Desire, and European Time" (*Oxford Handbook of Global Modernisms*) Eric Hayot argues for moving past models that use European modernism as the axis of resemblance against which other modernisms are contrasted. While suggesting that "there is no point external to the system of European modernism from which we might rethink the history of the term," Hayot proposes that attention to the indebtedness of the 'original' modernism to East Asian literatures and cultures will continue to revise the definition of global modernism.°68 However, conceding that there is "no point" in continuing to rethink modernism

and its definition(s) in comparative terms runs the risk of maintaining critical models that, as Shu-mei Shih has cautioned, "produce 'the West' as the agent of recognition and 'the rest' as the object of recognition, in representation."\textsuperscript{369} Within the study of twentieth and twenty-first century Chinese theater, it is still predominant to orient terms such as "modernist," "avant-garde," "expressionism," "experimental," and "absurd" within the post-Mao period and to describe them as responses to the People's Republic of China's "opening to the world" after the end of the Cultural Revolution and the vibrant translation culture that has thrived since.\textsuperscript{370} This risks reducing these later movements simply to belated instances or imitations (instead of adaptations or translations) of historical European precursors. The history that I have uncovered in this dissertation shows how this also misses intracultural sources within Chinese theater history that are modernist precursors to these later movements.\textsuperscript{371} The greater disciplinary challenge that remains is how to conceptualize comparative modernisms in other ways, ones that avoid placing "the West" and "the rest" in terms of relative priority or set precedent because, as Shih suggests, this makes one the representation and the other the original.

I first began researching Cao Yu's drama, and then embarked on the fuller study reflected in the preceding pages, after noticing that a 1984 play by Gao Xingjian 高行健 (b. 1940), The

\textsuperscript{370} One notable exception is Liang Luo's recent monograph \textit{The Avant-Garde and the Popular in Modern China: Tian Han and the Intersection of Performance and Politics} (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014).
\textsuperscript{371} As discussed in the Introduction, the definition and periodization of the terms modern / modernization / modernism in Chinese-language context is further complicated because the same word, xiandai 现代, may mean "modern" or "contemporary" based on context. Of course, this is no news to modernist studies: Raymond Williams, for example, pointed to how the term modern—first used in the sixteenth century to mean "now" and later meaning "recent" as opposed to "contemporary"—became fixed in the 1950s to refer to the period 1890–1940; "When Was Modernism?," \textit{New Left Review} I: 175 (1989).
Wild People (Yeren 野人) was filled with references to Cao Yu's 1937 *The Wilderness*.

While the plays are separated by almost half a century, the notion that Gao Xingjian's *Wild Man* was deeply influenced in both content and form by Cao Yu's *The Wilderness* hardly seems earth-shattering—Gao and Cao are easily the two most prominent *huaju* playwrights of the past century—yet this connection was largely absent from the voluminous criticism of both plays, in part because *The Wilderness* was suppressed for decades by politicized criticism for its class analysis not being strong enough. In existing scholarship on Gao Xingjian's plays of the 1980s, cross-cultural comparison (often encouraged by the author, also likely for political reasons) to European modernist dramatists and theorists of drama, including Brecht, has tended to overlook diachronic connections to earlier Chinese plays that similarly contested the edges of genre and of representation in highly self-aware fashion. The lacuna is especially disconcerting because both plays mine forms of *xiqu* for inspiration in reimagining *huaju*. In my subsequent research into early twentieth century Chinese theater, I have been particularly interested in works like Cao Yu's preface to *Thunderstorm*, as well as those studied in these pages—Chen Dabei's *The Hero and the Beauty*, Lin Huiyin's *Meizhen and Them*, and John Wong-Quincey's *She Stoops to Compromise*—that have fallen through the nets of critical and national literary narratives precisely for the way that these complicate accounts of when and where formal and generic turns take place.

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373 A typical example would be Monica Basting's *Yeren: Tradition und Avantgarde in Gao Xingjians Theaterstück "Die Wilden"* (1985) [Yeren: The Traditional and Avant-garde in Gao Xingjian's Play *The Wild Men*] (Bochum: Brockmeyer, 1988), which relates Gao's play to the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the Artaudian Theater of Cruelty, the Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt*, and Martin Esslin's *Theater of the Absurd*, but not to predecessors within Chinese spoken drama.
Soon after its publication in Chinese, Cao Yu's *Thunderstorm*, including the preface, was translated into English for the Shanghai-based periodical *T'ien Hsia Monthly*, in what was identified as an authorized translation by playwright Yao Xinnong (Yao Hsin-nung 姚莘农). T'ien Hsia Monthly belonged to a handful of Chinese English-language publications at the time that sought both to represent Chinese arts and culture for an international audience and, as Shuang Shen puts it, "consciously practiced cosmopolitanism through translating in both directions between China and the outside world." Shen points out that the choice of texts to translate, which spanned historical periods and genres, functioned as an example of a literary genealogy within T'ien Hsia that differed from Zhao Jiabi's *Compendium of the New Chinese Literature* discussed in my introduction. In this way the periodical presented through its English translations an anthology of Chinese literature that differed from the emerging New Culture or May Fourth canon; *Thunderstorm* would, however, belong to both. T'ien Hsia Monthly regularly featured translations from Chinese alongside articles on European and American culture, including, as Geremie R. Barmé finds, frequent inclusion of and reference to European and American literary modernism. An inaugural foreword by Sun Fo (Sun Ke 孙科, 1891–1973) emphasized the cultural focus of the magazine and the cosmopolitan perspective it sought to present in the face of modernization:

> In the nineteenth century, it was hoped that with the rapid development of communications by land, sea and air, nations by being brought closer together would come to a better understanding of each other. In this, we have been sadly disillusioned.

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374 The play appeared in *T’ien Hsia Monthly* issues 3:3-4:2 (1936–37) under the title "Thunder and Storm," an alternative translation of 雷⾬. Throughout I have adopted the name more commonly used in English today, *Thunderstorm*.


Frequent contacts have produced irritations. [...] we should also strive to bring about a friendly atmosphere, in which physical contiguity will not result in irritations, but in a genuine respect for each other's point of view. It is our firm conviction that the best way to do this is through cultural understanding.\textsuperscript{377}

In this light, Cao Yu's preface to Thunderstorm, where he introduces the idea of "distance for appreciation," becomes particularly relevant in the author's keen awareness of, and resistance to, critical assessments that pegged his work to this or that source from the Western dramatic tradition, particularly Ibsen: "I am myself—my insignificant self," he writes, "In the past ten years or more, I had verily read a number of plays and taken part in several stage performances, but in spite of exhausting all my powers of recollection, I cannot recall which specific part of my play was written in intentional imitation of which great master."\textsuperscript{378} A central metaphor of the preface captures the influence model Cao's critics were attempting to impose on him: the (Chinese) playwright as the servant who weaves golden threads from his (Western) masters' clothing into his own wretched garments; the very threads having faded "since they have come into my hand[s]." Through this imagery and in direct assertion of being "myself—my insignificant self," Cao Yu argues against indebtedness to Western influences. In doing so, his preface marks a turn of huaju toward becoming a naturalized, and eventually nationalized, theatrical form, transitioning beyond its intrasemiotically translated roots.

To return to Brecht, his essay on the Verfremdungseffekte of Chinese acting has always struck me for how seamlessly the author moves from the effect produced by the Chinese actor—a generalized Mei Lanfang—on one spectator, namely Brecht, to the effect hypothetically


\textsuperscript{378} Tsao Yü [Cao Yu], preface to Thunder and Rain, translated by Yao Hsin-nong, T'ien Hsia Monthly 3:3, 270-1. All quotations from this preface are drawn from Yao's translation.
produced on the actor's culturally contextual audience. Writing of Mei Lanfang’s performance, Brecht notes "the feeling of estrangement for us Europeans," and adds, "One has to be able to imagine them [the Chinese actors] achieving an alienation effect among their Chinese spectators, too." In this example, Brecht models the distancing he describes, taking a critical and self-reflexive attitude that seeks parallels in his own situation to what he sees enacted, instead of attempting to empathize with what the actor portrays. Does he see what is in front of him in Mei Lanfang's performance? Does it matter? Do the stakes change when we are critics looking at comparative modernisms and not watching a play, and when the world is not a stage?

For Cao Yu, "distance for appreciation" similarly attempts to move audiences from a place of empathy to one of reflection: "that the audience may see the play from a suitable standpoint, and avoid being shocked by either feeling or understanding." The "distance" in *Thunderstorm* would be created by the inclusion of a prologue and epilogue set ten years after the main action, with the house where the play takes place now converted into a mental hospital where several of the characters stay. The set-apart, discontinuous prologue and epilogue were meant, again in a way similar to epic theater, to function like a Greek chorus in commenting on the action of the play. Cao notes the disturbing element these sections introduced, such that "Clever critics generally pass them over without mention, thus avoiding many possible disputes that would not lead up to any conclusion." He also likens the effect of creating "distance for appreciation" to that of spreading what Yao translates as a "veil of gauze" over the play, yet the metaphor Cao uses is more literally theatrical: a *shamu纱幕*, a "gauze curtain" or scrim.

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381 Ibid., 281.
Scrims can be more or less transparent or opaque in different lighting and offer an apt metaphor for the way translations layer over their sources. So, too, with Chen Dabei's favored theatrical metaphor of the *xiyang jing* 西洋镜, the literal "Western mirror" that figures the realistic illusion of the stage; or Lin Huiyin's *pingfeng* 屏风 or screen, the traditional painting surface decorated with a bizarre and alienatingly casual modernist imagery; or, still yet, John Wong-Quincey's invoking of Hu Shi's *Greatest Event in Life* with a "nondescript and ill-assorted" Westernized Chinese home. Translation, like theater, creates illusions of an original, blends the traditional with the avant-garde, and juxtaposes cultural representations. This is particularly true of translation, from interlingual to intrasemiotic levels, within early *huaju* as a modernist theatrical formation.
"According to the Kuo Wen news Agency Prof. J. Wong-Quincey's latest play *She Stoops to Compromise* has won unqualified praise from Prof. G. P. Baker." *The North-China Daily News*, January 16, 1929.


Chang, Eileen. "On the Screen." *The Twentieth Century* 5:6 (October 1943): 432, quoted in


Chen Dabei 陈大悲, Aimeide xiju 爱美的戏剧 [Amateur Theater], reprint. (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian 上海书店, 2011.


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———. "Juben shang de 'yi' he 'ta'" "剧本上的'伊'和'她' [On 'Yi' (She) and 'Ta' (She) in Scripts]. Drama 1:1 (1921): 102-3.

———. "Rang wo lai chuopo zhe ge Xiyang jing ba" 让我来戳破这个西洋景罢 [Let Me Break This Illusion]. Chenbao fukan 晨报副刊 [Morning Post arts and culture supplement], 242
December 9-10, 1921.


———. Yizhe xuyan 译者叙言 [Translator's Introduction], Drama 1:1 (1921): 45.


Ding Xilin 丁西林. 《Dear Husband》. Translated by Bonnie S. McDougall and Flora Lam.  


Dujian 独见 [possibly Ling Dujian 凌独见]. "Kan le Yinxiang yu meiren zhi hou" 看了「英雄与美人」之后 [After Watching The Hero and the Beauty]. Chenbao fukan 晨报副刊 [Morning Post arts and culture supplement], December 7, 1921.


Fengzi 凤子. "Shanghai yanqu Weiqu qiuquan de dian huiyi" 上海演出「委曲求全」的点
回忆 [A Few Memories of Performing *She Stoops to Compromise* in Shanghai]. Xin wenxue shiliao 新文学史料 1984:2.


Gong Yuan 龚元. "Zhongguo xiandai huaju shi shang de 'Qinghua chuantong'" 中国现代话剧史上的"清华传统" [The 'Tsinghua Tradition' in the History of Modern Chinese Theater].


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