A Microcosm of Modernism: The Introduction and Continuation of James Joyce in China (1922-1949) – From the Circulation of the First Edition of *Ulysses* in China

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Abstract:

On February 2, 1922, Ulysses was published in Paris by the Shakespeare & Company in a limited first edition of 1,000 copies. Among the customers who have booked were William Butler Yeats, Ezra Pound, Andre Gide, Ernest Miller Hemingway and other world-renowned writers. Surprisingly, the Company received an order from China. It is recorded that Joyce excitedly told the news to his patron, Ms. Harriet Shaw Weaver, editor of The Egoist magazine. This order ushers in a great story of the entry of modern Western literature into China represented by Ulysses, especially the promotion of Joyce in China and its influence on Chinese modern literati. In November of the same year, Shen Yanbing沈雁冰 published a review of Joyce citing Western commentaries of his new work in the column "News from the Overseas Literary World" in Novel Monthly小說月報, Vol. 13, No. 11, unfortunately misrepresenting him as a "new American writer" and a "representative of Dadaism". On July 7, 1923, Xu Zhimo published a new poem he composed, "KangQiao Xiye Muse"康橋西野暮色(Dusk in the West Suburb of Cambridge) in a supplement to Shanghai Shishi Xinbao上海時事 新報, Xue Deng學燈, with a foreword referring to Joyce and his work Ulysses. Subsequently, Zhao Jingshen 趙景深, Fei Jianzhao 費鑒照, Xia Ji'an 夏 濟安, Wu Xinghua吳興華 and others began to pay attention to and promote Joyce and his works. Their introduction may be particularly interesting and have, to some extent, influenced the understanding of Joyce in later generations. After a hundred years of *Ulysses*'s publication, this paper will trace the origin of Joyce's introduction and continuation in China with some new materials, using the circulation of the first edition of *Ulysses* in China as the main clue, and analyzing the comments or translations by Xu Zhimo, Shen

Yanbing, Zhao Jingshen, Wu Xinghua, in an attempt to restore the interaction between the spread of Chinese and Western literature, and also to explore the spread and influence of modernism in China.

Keywords: James Joyce, SHEN Yanbing, XU Zhimo, Spread of Chinese and Western Literature

Introduction

Although James Joyce never came to China, he had a deep relationship with China. Joyce mentioned China twice in his correspondence with friends. On October 23, 1923, Joyce wrote a letter to his sponsor, Harriet Shaw Weaver, saying, "I learned from my friends that there is a club in Shanghai in the Far East, where the ladies meet twice a week to discuss my masterpiece (that is, *Ulysses*)." (Lu, 1997) On September 13, 1924, Joyce wrote another letter to Ms. Weaver, saying: "The fifth edition of *Ulysses* comes out in a fortnight. Miss Beach (who is taking a holiday) received many orders in advance–ten from Pekin." ¹Although Joyce's words may be exaggerated, it is not difficult to see the circulation and dissemination of Joyce's works in China.

The emergence of Chinese reviews of Joyce was marked by the cultural event of the publication of *Ulysses* at Shakespeare & Company in Paris in February 1922. In November of the same year, Shen Yanbing published a review of Joyce citing Western commentaries of his new work in the column "News from the Overseas Literary World" in *Novel Monthly*, Vol. 13, No. 11, unfortunately misrepresenting him as a "new American writer" and a "representative of Dadaism". However, this review may be the starting point of Joyce's entry into China. In recent years, the topic of "Joyce and China" has also attracted the attention and discussion of many scholars in China (cf. Jin Di, 2001; Wang, 2000; Tsoi, 2007; Zhang, 2009; Sun, 2009; Dai, 2021), which is nevertheless basically limited to the sorting out and introduction of basic materials. Based on this, this paper will take the circulation of the first editi-

¹ The letter is collected in the British Library, dated September 13, 1924.

on of *Ulysses* in China as the starting point, and "The Chinese review of Joyce" as the main thread, focusing on the promotion of Joyce by Shen Yanbing, Xu Zhimo, Zhao Jingshen, Zhou Libo, Wu Xinghua, Xia Ji'an, and others, and exploring more important aspects behind the translation, along with the spread and influence of modernism in China.

Part I the First Edition of Ulysses in China

From 1918 to 1920, Ulysses was published in serial chapters in The Little Review, an American literary journal that was popular and had a regular readership. On February 2, 1922, Ulysses was published in Paris by the Shakespeare & Company in a limited first edition of 1,000 copies, with a list of customers that included William Butler Yeats, Ezra Pound, André Gide, Ernest Miller Hemingway, T. S. Eliot and other world-renowned authors.¹ Surprisingly, the bookstore received an order from China, which ushered in the entry of Western modernist literature into China, represented by Ulysses. According to prior research by scholars such as Jin Di and Zhang Yu, Joyce had excitedly told his sponsor, Ms. Weaver, the editor of The Egoist magazine, about the news (cf. Jin, 2001; Zhang, 2009) Jin Di and Zhang Yu is mainly based on the account of Mary T. Reynolds (Reynolds, 1999), an American expert in the study of Joyce, which is mainly derived from Joyce's unpublished letter (September 13, 1924). I have checked the relevant correspondence and found that ten copies of Ulysses were indeed ordered from Shakespeare & Company in Paris to China, but they were the fifth edition in 1924, not the first edition in February 1922. Then the question becomes whether Shakespeare & Company had received an order from China in 1922. When I looked up Ms. Beach's original manuscript order forms from 1922 to 1924, I found that the Shakespeare & Company in Paris did receive an order from China in 1922, and that the purchase was made by La Librairie Française (cf. Yi, 2016; Lei, 2013; Tang, 2022) in Peking.

¹ The Princeton University Library has kept Ms. Beach's 1872-1999 manuscript (C0108), which contains the detailed original customer orders (*Ulysses* Subscribers) for *Ulysses*. See the website for details https://findingaids.princeton.edu/collections/C0108/c00753.

Nº 517-2. RECEPISSÉ déposant. Nom of adresse du destinataire Valeur déclarée (1) Remboursement Coller ici l'éliquette gomm

(Slips with Names of Subscribers, 1922-1924)

Since there is no written record of this order in La Librairie Française, it is impossible to ascertain information about the order/buyer of this limited edition order. Jin Di, one of the Chinese translators of *Ulysses*, has guessed that GU Hongming辜鴻銘 (1957-1928) may have been the buyer or one of the buyers (Jin, 2001: 15). Although it is impossible to verify the buyer's information from this order, the news that Shakespeare & Company received an order from China suggests that someone in China was already taking an interest in Joyce's new work at the time. It is worth noting that this order was also the earliest order of *Ulysses* in Asia (Reynolds, 1999: 244). Subsequently, on August 23, 1924, August 30, 1924, and July 11, 1933, La Librairie Française in Peking ordered ten, ten, and five copies of *Ulysses*, respectively, from Shakespeare & Company, which showcased the immense interest in Joyce in China at that time.

Part II Early reviews

In November 1922, SHEN Yanbing introduced James Joyce and his new novel *Ulysses* to mainland Chinese readers for the first time in his column "News from Overseas Literary World" in *Novel Monthly*, Vol. 13, No. 11, in which he introduced the latest news about the "English and American literary worlds".

"I have said that the critics of modern Britain and the United States held divergent ideas of certain literary works. Recently, the publication of Ulysses added to the inconsistence. Joyce was a Quasi-Dadaism-new American writer. *Ulysses* was serialized in *The Little Review* in 1918. At that time, some 'vulgar' readers wrote letters to *The Little Review* to complain about this book. However, there are still some young people who enthusiastically praised the book. British youth enjoyed Joyce, which probably resulted from Wilson's praise of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (published slightly earlier than *Ulysses*). But the great critic Arnold Bennett has recently written a paper and was very dissatisfied with *Ulysses*. He asked for the traditional rules of fiction to denounce *Ulysses* for his rambling way of writing. Although he said, "the best passages in this book are immortal", he did not praise the book, but criticized it more than praised it" (Shen, 1922).

From this introduction, we can find that SHEN Yanbing was not familiar with Joyce as he mistook him for "a new American writer" and "a representative of Dadaism", and the introduction of Joyce was only placed under the sub-column of "English and American Literature". As the editorin-chief of *Novel Monthly* at that time, SHEN Yanbing probably only hoped to promote the development of Chinese literature or provide readers with a new window of knowledge through translation and introduction of recent developments in overseas literary circles.

On July 7, 1923, Xu Zhimo published a new poem he composed, "KangQiao Xiye Muse" (Dusk in the West Suburb of Cambridge) in a supplement to Shanghai *Shishi Xinbao*, Xue Deng, with a foreword referring to Joyce and his work *Ulysses*. Although Xu Zhimo's comments are brief, they also contain some crucial information. First, Xu Zhimo revealed Joyce's position in the international literary world: he was not only criticized, but also adored and loved by readers, which may be related to Joyce's unique writing techniques and content. Secondly, it briefly introduces Joyce's two novels (*A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses*) and their influence. The original style of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* opens a new era in prose. Although the publication of the new novel *Ulysses* was difficult and bumpy, we have to admit the uniqueness of *Ulysses*. Thirdly, Xu Zhimo directly expressed his appreciation for Joyce's unique creative techniques and

took the last chapter of *Ulysses* as an example. From this passage, we can find a small mistake in Xu Zhimo's comments. The last chapter of *Ulysses* published by Shakespeare & Company in Paris in 1922 is more than 40 pages in total, not the one hundred pages written by Xu Zhimo, and the last chapter is also segmented. However, these small mistakes did not affect Xu Zhimo's overall judgment of Joyce, which would have a great impact on the understanding of Joyce in later generations to a considerable extent.

After the "Dusk in the West Suburb of Cambridge", Xu Zhimo recommended *A book of Modern Short Stories*, which included Joyce's short stories "Araby" and "Ivy day in the committee room" in "*Xin Yue*新月", Vol. 2, No. 1, in "Overseas Publishing" (Xu, 1929). It is clear enough that Xu Zhimo was familiar with Joyce and consciously recommended him that it is no wonder that Wen Jieruo once made the assumption that "had Xu Zhimo not met with an early death in the airplane accident, a Chinese translation of *Ulysses* might have appeared in the 1930s. (Han & Li, 2019)." Although Xu Zhimo's untimely death did not further advance the selected translation of Joyce's works, his recommendation of Joyce accordingly promoted other scholars' attention to and review of Joyce in China.

On January 30, 1929, Literary Weekly published a translation of Zhao Jingshen's translation of John Carruthers's article "Trends in Modern British and American Fiction," which argued that "the most important literary and scientific influence on the technique of the modern British novel is the power of the psyche.[...] To these scientific forces must be added three of the most authoritative novelists of modern times, most recently Marcel Proust, James Joyce, and Miss Dorothy Richardson.[...] Joyce was the most important of the three – at the time. There was not a modern writer in England or America who had not read 'Ulysses', and everyone wanted to know how the author got his success; for better or for worse, whether consciously or unconsciously, many of them were imitating him more or less." On August 10, 1929, Zhao Jingshen published another article entitled "Twenty Years of English Fiction" in the special issue of Novel Monthly, Vol. 20, No. 8, "Modern World Literature," in which he introduced writers such as Lawrence, George, Huxley, Joyce, and Woolf. In two articles published in 1929, Zhao Jingshen highly appreciated Joyce's writing style and became the scholar who strongly recommended Joyce's works after Xu Zhimo.

Part III The Wave of review in the 1930s

On February 10, 1931, Wang Tiran 汪倜然 introduced the news that "Joyce is living in Paris" and mentioned Joyce's eye disease in his article "The Recent World Literary World" in Qianfeng Yuekan前鋒月刊, Vol. 1, No. 5, which triggered a wave of reviews of Joyce by Chinese scholars in the 1930s. The article "Shakespeare & Co. and Joyce" by Xuan Ming in "Paris Art & Literature" was very informative, covering the publication and sales of Ulysses at Shakespeare & Company in Paris, comments by Western scholars, and the main features of *Ulysses*. Xuan Ming's understanding of Joyce's work is also very original and profound: "The main characteristic of '*Ulysses*', apart from its astonishing boldness, lies in the application of inner monologues. Joyce himself does not consider himself to be the creator of this inner monologue. [...] Joyce writes in a very strange way; he does not work from beginning to end. He often writes here and there. He marked them with various colors of pens before putting things together bit by bit, and he worked with such sincerity that he sometimes spent twelve hundred hours on a single chapter. In terms of word selection, Joyce also worked very hard. He thought that the words that readers were familiar with were just like old coins that could no longer have their original value, so he almost created a new kind of literature (Xuan, 1932)." On January 1, 1933, Fei Jianzhao published an article on "The Irish Writer Joyce" in *Literary Monthly*, in which he analyzed in detail Joyce's works including Dubliners, A Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man and Ulysses (Fei, 1933). On July 1, 1933, Yang Changxi wrote a reportorial article "Joyce goes to Switzerland for Eye Treatment" in Literary Monthly, Vol. 4, No. 1, which focused on Joyce's situation and, although short, was in line with international news (Yang, 1933). On March 1, 1934, Literary Monthly announced in its Vol. 5, No. 3, "Literary Information" that "the U.S. ban on Ulysses had been lifted" and the book was republished by Random House on January 25, 1934 (Yang, 1934). On the same day, Literature published in Vol. 2, no. 3, Fu Donghua's translation of Joyce's short story "Counterparts, Dubliners", which was the first Chinese selected translation of Joyce's work to appear in China. On May 1, 1934, Chinese *Literature*, Vol. 1, No. 5, published Jiang Dongzen's translation of "Joyce and the Emerging Irish Writers," and revealed Joyce's unique style. On June 1, 1934, Literary Monthly published Hu Qinzi's translation of "Eveline" in its Volume 5, Issue 6. In the early 1930s, Literary Monthly published four articles on Joyce (most of which were reprints/translations of reported articles in Western literary magazines) along with the translation of Joyce's short story "Eveline, *Dubliners*", which makes the journal the most extensive and detailed publication on Joyce in the 1930s (Zhang, 2009, p. 70).

On April 15, 1935, Hong Kong's literary journal *Hongdou*紅豆 (*Red Bean*) published Dan Xi's translation of "The Boarding House, *Dubliners*," which was also the first appearance of Joyce's work in a Hong Kong periodical. Coincidentally, in the same year, the same article, with different translation was published in the supplement of *Shun Pao*'s "自由談(Free Talk)." In March 1936, the Commercial Press in Shanghai published Bian Zhilin's *Xichuang ji*西窗集 (*The West Window Collection*), where the translation of Joyce's short story "Eveline, *Dubliners*" is included. The translation of Joyce's works by Chinese scholars in the 1930s focused on stories in *Dubliners*, which may also be credited to the genre of *Dubliners*, a collection of short stories easy to translate.

In addition, two other critical essays from this period are worth notice. The first is Zhou Libo's "James Joyce," the second representative review article comes from Ling He's "On the New Psychological Realism Novel". Zhou Libo and Ling He have a very different viewpoint from the previous scholars' commentaries/translations, and *Ulysses* seems to them to be an obscene work (Zhang, 2009, pp. 73-73; Guo, 2006).

Part IV The Publication of The New Book "Finnegans Wake"

In May 1939, Joyce's new novel *Finnegan's Wake* was published, and the related introductory text was immediately published in Chinese periodicals. In its second issue, *Western Literature*'s "Book Review" section published two reviews, "*Finnegan's Wake*" and "A Study of Joyce." These two articles are also important documents for understanding Joyce's new work and his fiction writing. Wu Xinghua's "*Finnegan's Wake*" introduces, analyzes, and reviews Joyce's new work. Remarkably, at a time when there was no bibliography available at home or abroad, Wu Xinghua seemed to be able not only to read *Finnegan's Wake*, but also to unravel and appreciate its mysteries. In his essay, Wu writes: "The musicality of Joyce's text is beyond words. They seem to be effective not just because of the sense of hearing: for example, the ending of Anna Livia – a passage I personally find the most beautiful in the whole book: Can't hear with the waters of The chittering waters of [...]"(Wu, 1940) Ouyang Jing's "A Study of Joyce" focuses on H. S. Gorman's biography of Joyce, which has become one of the key documents in the study of Joyce. Ouyang Jing gives Joyce high praise at the end of the article: "No matter how little Joyce is known to the general reader, he has become a representative of the modern spirit (Ou, 1940, p. 272)."

In 1940, the third issue of Xishu Jinghua西書精華(West Book Highlights) published a book review, "The Dream Novels of Joyce," written by Wen He (identified as Xia Ji'an夏濟安), focusing on Joyce's new novel, Finnegan's Wake. In the opening paragraph, the author places Joyce's highly in literary history: "He is one of the world's greatest writers, and his A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man and Ulysses are masterpieces of the modern literary world. Ulysses is of particular importance; it has vast influence and a novelty of technique that few books in twentieth-century literature can match (Wen, 1940)." As for the new novel Finnegan's Wake, Wen thinks it is so difficult to read that few readers will be interested in it. After the title of the article on the contents page, there is even a description "A World Least Bestseller (Wen, 1940:129)." The early reviews of Joyce by Xia Ji'an also influenced the attention and study of Joyce by the Xia Ji'an and Xia Zhiqing in the later years (Wang & Ji, 2017).

Part V Joyce's Death Memorial Issue

On January 13, 1941, James Joyce passed away, and the news agency "Haithong" published the following message on *Shun Pao*: "The famous Irish writer James Joyce died in this hospital yesterday following a long-term illness. Joyce was born in Dublin on February 2, 1882. He studied at the University of Belvedere and had lived in Rome, Paris, Zurich and Trieste for many years. His debut works include the lyric poem *Chamber Music* published in 1907, *Dubliners* and the novel *A Portrait of The Artist as a Young Man* in 1916, and the play *Exiles* in 1918. His masterpiece *Ulysses*, published in Paris in 1922, was a bold work."

Only two months later, in its seventh issue (March, 1941), *Western Literature* published a "Joyce Issue" which includes the following statement: "After hearing the news of Joyce's death, we prepared a special issue to commemorate this great contemporary writer and to introduce his works to readers (this had previously been done only in book reviews)." (Editorial Words, 1941) Because of the short preparation time for this issue, only four

pieces could be prepared: "Selected Poems of Joyce" (translated by Song Tifen), the short story "A Painful Case, *Dubliners*," "Three Verses from the *Ulysses*" (translated by Wu Xinghua), and Edmund Wilson's "On Joyce" (selected and translated by Zhang Zhilian). Each of them is for fiction, poetry, criticism, and selected translations respectively. *Western Literature* was one of the few literary journals to focus on Joyce in the 1940s and claims to be the most powerful modern literary journal to promote Joyce (Guo, 2013).

In addition, the timely publication of the news of Joyce's death in the columns of "World Academic Information" and "Art World Observatory" sections in *Xuesheng yuekan*學生月刊 (*Student Monthly*) and Yishu yu shenghuo藝術與生活 (*Art and Life*) respectively shows that China keeps abreast of the global literary scene.

Part VI Summary

The introduction of Joyce to China was marked by the cultural event of the publication of Ulysses in 1922. In the 1920s Joyce was mostly found in articles such as special issues of overseas literary news, which occasionally reported on Joyce's recent status, the publication of Ulysses, and his creative techniques but contained no translations of Joyce's works. In the 1930s, the enthusiasm for introducing Joyce reached a climax thanks to the hard work of Zhao Jingshen, Zhao Jiabi, Yang Changxi, Fu Donghua and others. This led to the emergence of a large number of articles introducing Joyce's works, as well as some monographs and translations. In the 1940s, the promotion of Joyce in *Western Literature* was an important event in the history of Chinese translation (Zha & Xie, 2007), and the "Joyce Issue" also reflected the vision and literary sensitivity of Western Literature's editors. In the Chinese literary world, all of the following information can be found: the publication of Ulysses in 1922, the lifting of the ban on Ulysses in the U.S. in 1933, and the publication of *Finnegan's Wake* in 1939, as well as Joyce's personal news, such as Joyce in Paris, Joyce's trip to Switzerland for eye treatment, and Joyce's death (Dai, 2021, p. 5). It can be seen that the Chinese literary world is quick to react to Joyce-related news. Even during the Gu Dao孤島 Period (Isolated-Island period), the Chinese literary world did not cease to pay timely attention to the news of the Western literary world. These critical essays may be mediocre in content and depth and even contain some intellectual errors, but they also reflect the concern over and understanding of

Joyce by previous generations of scholars in the 1920s and 1930s. Certain views have even influenced the interpretation of Joyce by later generations.

Tracing the roots of Joyce's introduction to China and its continuation after a century, this paper is both a historical review of Joyce's presence in China and an apt recreation of the great literary story between the spread of Chinese and Western literature. Perhaps this reflects just what Joyce said: "I have set up enough mysteries in the book to keep professors arguing for centuries (Ellmann, 1983)." The year 2022 marked the first hundred years of the publication of *Ulysses*, proving how enduring a topic Joyce has become.

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