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Translingualism and Autoexotic Translation in Shan Sa's Franco-Chinese Historical Novels

Abstract

The Franco-Chinese migrant woman writer Shan Sa left Beijing for Paris in 1990 at the age of seventeen. After her settlement in France, French soon became her additional, increasingly dominant language of literary creation. This article examines Shan's three French-language novels that explicitly engage with Chinese historical and transhistorical narratives: *Les Quatre Vies du saule* (1999), *La Cithare nue* (2010), and *Impératrice* (2003). The former two were adaptively (self-)translated into Chinese and diegetically re-organized, truncated, and expanded in their Chinese versions. The latter rewriting of the intriguing legend of Empress Wu during the Tang dynasty showcases the incorporation of Chinese calligraphic aesthetic into the French novelistic fabric in Shan's transcultural writing. Drawing on Steven Kellman's "translingual imagination", this article argues that the translingualism inherent in Shan's (re-)creative process manifests itself as an autoexotic literary aesthetic and a continuous source of fabulation, opening up possibilities of narrative alterity.

Keywords

Shan Sa, French Chinese Novel, Translation, Translingualism, Autoexoticism

Already a published teenage poet in China, Shan Sa left Beijing for Paris at the age of seventeen in 1990. She represents the younger

generation of the group of established Franco-Chinese migrant writers and artists in France, such as François Cheng, Dai Sijie, Gao Xingjian. French has become the dominant language of her literary creation. Yet, the thematic concerns of her works are largely China-focused. Shan is better known for her novel *Joueuse de go* (2001), but this article focuses on three of her other French-language novels that explicitly engage with Chinese historical and transhistorical¹ narratives from ancient to modern times: *Les Quatre Vies du saule* (1999), *La Cithare nue* (2010), and *Impératrice* (2003). These historical novels are “not based upon the empirical concepts of history” (Scholes 1979, 206) which are primarily preoccupied with the so-called factual or documentary truth. Fabulation and mystification reach their highest degree in *Saule* and *Cithare* where the supernatural animism in the “weeping willow” and the “ancient zither” (a plucked seven-string musical instrument also known as *guqin*)—items imbued with significance in classical Chinese culture—sustains two respective transhistorical narratives extending to our contemporary world. Additionally, the Chinese *versions* of the first two novels—*Liu de sisheng* (2011) (for *Saule*) and *Luoqin* (2015) (for *Cithare*)—demonstrate drastic diegetic reconfigurations of the French “originals”, which further highlight the manifold creative process of (auto-)translation, adaptation, and rewriting in translingual and transcultural literature.² *Impératrice* shares such a creative process to a large extent, although the Chinese translation or version of the novel is not yet available. Among the three novels, *Impératrice*, a translingual rewriting of the intriguing legend of Empress Wu Zetian (624-705) set during the Tang dynasty, stands out as the most “historical”—firmly grounded in the historical sense of time, chronological, with realistic details and (apparent) fidelity to historical facts. It has all the features of a historical biography. In particular, Shan’s empowering first-person treatment of female sexualities in ancient China via the French language offers a fresh challenge to many existing, male-dominated accounts of this historical figure. This article will demonstrate the cross-cultural transformativity inherent in Shan’s

(re)creative process, which entails a kind of autoexotic literary aesthetic. Multi-layered linguistic and textual transformations reveal themselves as continuous sources of fabulation which open up possibilities of narrative alterity in the global context.

Shan’s French-language novels can be framed as ‘exophone literature’, i.e. literature written in a language other than the author’s native one, and often ‘born of an adventurous spirit to go outside the mother tongue’.³ For exophone and bilingual writers like Shan, writing often begins with translation, or even *auto*-translation where the prefix “auto-” is understood not only as “self” from its Greek root, but also as “author” and “authority” from its Latin paronym. Therefore, an auto-translator can perform the double role of the translator and re-creator (Ferraro, Grutman, 2016, 10). This is particularly true when the content of those exophone writers’ works are strongly identified with the cultures they were born into, and the writers themselves are extensively involved in the translation of their works “back” into their native languages. Their works can then be seen as a form of “born-translated literature” where translation signals “a condition of their production” (Walkowitz, 2017, 3-4). The translational and transcultural performativity of Shan’s texts will deeply problematise many persistent notions of the “original”, “faithfulness”, and “authenticity” in the way we approach cross-cultural studies today.

Saule consists of four seemingly unrelated love stories, each taking place in a different historical period, chronologically spanning from the Ming (1368–1644), through the Qing (1636–1912) and the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), to contemporary China. The “weeping willow” is identified with a female character in each episode, as if the eternal soul of a woman is “condamnée à poursuivre l’amour de siècle en siècle” (backcover). Meanwhile, *Cithare* engages with two parallel historical narratives with a temporal gap of almost two centuries: through various anecdotes and incidents about a legendary zither, the destiny of a poor *luthier* (stringed instrument maker) named Shen Feng from the Chen

dynasty (557-589) becomes inextricably intertwined with the wife of the historical figure Liu Yu, Emperor Wu of Liu Song dynasty (363-422). Similarly, the novel ends with a brief scenario about the zither in contemporary China.

Shan clearly draws creative inspiration from Chinese cultural heritage. The legend of the zither goes all the way back to the Chinese creation myth, which is repeatedly mentioned by the luthier's master in the novel. The earliest literary references to zither date back to *Shijing*, the oldest existing collection of Chinese poetry said to have been compiled by Confucius. Meanwhile, the willow tree, especially the weeping willow, is the most frequently cited and elaborated plant in classical Chinese literature (Pan, 2016, chap. 2). Its slenderness and suppleness in the breeze have been conventionally compared to those of a graceful woman's physical appearance and attitude (*ibid.*). Moreover, the weeping willow is often associated with sadness or grief about separation (as it is sometimes fleetingly described in the West too) (*ibid.*). However, in order to suit her poetic agenda, as if in an attempt to enhance the exotic appeal to her francophone readership, Shan further develops the literary topos of willow by supplementing its symbolic relation to "la mort et la renaissance" (backcover) in Chinese culture. In reality, this last relation is far from systematic in popular Chinese imaginations or literary associations, and should be understood as part of Shan's cross-cultural artistic fabulation. Thus it is interesting to remark how the initial phrase of the blurb on the backcover "en Chine" is transformed into "in ancient China" (在古老中国) in the Chinese version of the novel. To make the Chinese readership "believe" in her "Chinese" fabulation, the author (or the publisher) feels obliged to guide readers' imagination to a distant, mystical, yet historically informed past, which can, in turn, open up temporal space for aesthetic renegotiation with tradition.

Much of Shan's creative energy and literary success in the francophone world seems to derive from her recycling of Chinese cultural clichés. Yet, it is the (re)writing of these clichés

in French that allows Shan to make a radical departure from her native language and, by extension, her culture of origin, in search of a new aesthetic possibility. What could it be? The author herself speaks of her ultimate pursuit to "infuse every French sentence with Chinese artistic conceptions" (每一句法文都要融进中国意境) (Zhou, 31/10/2007). To achieve this, two significant linguistic strategies employed by Shan are: metaphors informed by Chinese idiomatic expressions, especially those rich in imagery; and textual engagement with the visual and semiotic qualities of ideograms in Chinese calligraphy. As to the former, Sophie Croiset's (2009; 2010) excellent scholarship already offers many helpful examples. In short, this first metaphorical approach to "Chineseness" hints at a loose, elaborate, or appropriative translational process from certain rather clichéd Chinese image-expressions to French, producing in this latter language an "original" poetic effect. Here I would like to illuminate the second strategy based on an important example from *Impératrice*. In the following passage near the beginning of the novel, the first-person narrator, aged five then, describes her perception of the evening scene in the mountain, as she has been asked to become a family representative at a Buddhist monastery to observe mourning ritual and pray for the recently diseased grandmother:

La montagne respirait. La montagne était triste, la montagne était contente. [...] Le ciel s'ouvrait à la verticale quand descendait le crépuscule ocre, jaune, noir. Quand le soir montait des vallées, les astres se dévoilaient. [...] chaque étoile était une écriture mystérieuse et le ciel un livre sacré. [...] La lune croissait et décroissait. Les jours, points, cercles se transformaient en caractères cursifs dont on ne distinguait plus le sens. J'appréhendais le temps en regardant le Bouddha qui, sous les pics de fer, se matérialisait. Regard tendre, sourire mystérieux, [...]. J'étais muette de stupeur: la divinité a surgi du néant! (21)

At first glance, this passage depicts the passing of time with a classic Chinese setting. “La lune croissait et décroissait” echoes the Chinese expression *yin-qing-yuan-que* (阴晴圆缺) describing the various states of the moon and, by analogy, the fugacity and unpredictability of human lives. The Chinese character for “day” (“jour”) is 日, and this ideogram derives from the shape of the sun (hence the “circle”) with a ray of light (hence the “point” in the middle). The character bears close resemblance to that of “moon” 月, especially when one writes in a “cursive” way. While the alternation between the sun and the moon naturally indicates the passage of time, the image of them appearing together in the sky—achieving perfect balance and harmony between yin and yang—takes on an auspicious significance according to Chinese astrology, the corresponding Chinese idiom being *ri-yue-jiao-hui* (日月交辉). This then ties in with the divine presence of the smiling Buddha. Furthermore, when we put 日 (“the sun”) and 月 (“the moon”) together in this order, it gives the character 明 for “bright light”, a direct synonym for *zhao* 照 according to *Shuowen*.⁴ Empress Wu Zetian is alternatively named Wu Zhao, and in fact, it is the French translation of the latter name as “Lumière” that Shan consistently utilises in her novel. Incidentally, the historical Empress Wu is also famous for commissioning the construction of gigantic Buddha statues in her own image.

The background setting of a “breathing mountain” in this passage is also well intended, if we remind ourselves of what the author’s name Shan Sa 山飒 means in Chinese — “the rustling of wind in the mountain”. I will even argue that these seemingly indistinguishable cursive calligraphic characters of “lune”, “jours”, “points”, and “cercles”, in addition to the presence of the mountain (*shan*) and the image of Buddha with “sourire mystérieux”, play a fundamental *structural* role in the novel: it begins with “lunes interminables, univers opaque” (9) and ends with a series of self-affirmations: “je brille comme une étoile. [...] Je suis le sourire indulgent de la Montagne. Je suis le sourire énigmatique de Celui qui fait tourner la Roue de l’Éternité” (444). The author evidently identifies

and even develops an emotional relationship with the subject of her research.

French readers without linguistic training in Chinese may not be able to articulate the exact Chinese linguistic and visual impact on Shan’s French text. However, what they will undeniably experience is the effect of a striking aesthetic *étrangeté* (both in the sense of “strange” and “foreign”) “amenée par les traits particuliers de l’écriture chinoise qui ont conditionné le regard littéraire” of the author (Croiset, 2009, para. 22). Such an effect is fully intended by Shan: “Et j’espère que cette langue française est écrite de telle manière qu’à travers elle, on aperçoit ce qu’est la langue chinoise. C’est peut-être là ce qui fait le style de tous mes livres” (cited in Croiset, 2009, para. 19). This, in a word, is a blatant form of exoticism, but as Xiaofan Amy Li (2017, 393) duly observes: “something becomes exotic not because it is inherently so but because its audience and their perspective make it so”. In this respect, Shan’s works may be seen as symptomatic of a certain cross-cultural imperative to “produce a marketable art only by exoticising oneself and one’s culture”.⁵

If so much of her literary accomplishment in French and in the francophone world is dependent on her recycling of Chinese cultural clichés and her contrivance of the particularities of the Chinese language and visual arts, how does Shan, then, respond to the aesthetic and stylistic challenges when her novels (re-)enter the sinophone space of articulation?⁶ The following investigation compares the French and Chinese versions of *Saule* and *Cithare*.

The status of the Chinese versions as the “translations” of the French “originals” is highly ambiguous. Culturally speaking, we may well be tempted to see the Chinese versions as the “originals” despite their being second in publication. Contrary to their French textuality, the Chinese versions of *Saule* (as *Liu*) and *Cithare* (as *Laoqin*) signal very little effect of *étrangeté*—they are two “perfectly Chinese” transhistorical narratives written in “perfectly normal” modern vernacular Chinese. Then on the technical level, *Liu* is

officially advertised as an “adaptation” of *Saule*, while *Luoqin* is almost presented as a novel “originally” written in Chinese. I say “almost” because the role of the two translators is visibly kept to a minimum appearing only in a small font size on the publication info page at the back of the title page, along with the names of the production managers, the editor, the reviewer, and the cover designer. Crucially, the reviewer is Shan Sa.

The four relatively independent, chronologically organised narratives—“four lives”—in *Saule* (1999) are drastically rearranged, rewritten, truncated but also expanded in *Liu* (2011). We need to bear in mind that there is indeed a twelve-year gap between the two publication dates. In addition to linguistic and literary concerns, public taste, social trends, ideological evolution, as well as Shan’s own intellectual development could all motivate this “Chinese” transformation of *Saule*. Linda Hutcheon’s (Hutcheon, O’Flynn, 2013, 142) theoretical observation is particularly pertinent here:

An adaptation, like the work it adapts, is always framed in a context—a time and a place, a society and a culture; it does not exist in a vacuum. Fashions, not to mention value systems, are context-dependent. Many adapters deal with this reality of reception by updating the time of the story in an attempt to find contemporary resonance for their audiences.

Chapter Three of *Saule*, which takes up about one third of the novel in length, recounts the tragic teenage romance between the male protagonist Wen and his female companion Saule during the Cultural Revolution. This chapter disappears completely in *Liu*—therefore the willow has only three lives in the Chinese version. It is unclear whether this part met with some form of censorship from the publisher when Shan was preparing the Chinese version.⁷ At any rate, a “faithful translation” of this chapter into Chinese would have significantly diminished the ingenuity of Shan’s Chinese literary language. In this chapter, Shan incorporates direct translations

of a large number of Chinese Communist revolutionary slogans, expressions, lyrics, and Maoist sayings:

L’Orient est rouge. [...] Pour naviguer, nous avons besoin d’un Timonier. [...] L’Etoile rouge brille de tous ses feux. (156)
Ceux qui représentent l’autorité se sont embourgeoisés et se reposent sur la docilité de la jeunesse. (158)
Jamais je ne pourrai être paysanne et à la hauteur des exigences révolutionnaires. (198)

While such stereotyped language would in all likelihood meet with contempt or be used for sarcastic purposes nowadays in China, its direct translation into French actually produces a certain *poetic* effect (but not without a sense of humour and irony). The French readership are more likely—and are allowed—to be curious or superficially passionate about anecdotes from the “Red China”. The language of this chapter also allows Shan to showcase the evolution of the Chinese language and literary style *via* French—just what she claims to do in the aforementioned interview—in her transhistorical narration. By contrast, for the Chinese readership, such a linguistic and stylistic particularity may be deemed to be too obvious as a cultural cliché, which makes the narration empty, “unoriginal” and unconvincing. Judging by their poetic effects on respective readerships, Michaël Oustinoff describes this kind of cross-cultural clichés as “cliché *cuit*” in one language but “cliché *vif*” in another.⁸

The key to Shan’s Chinese adaptation of *Saule* is the drastic rearrangement of the narrative structure while significantly expanding the last chapter of *Saule*—only about ten pages—in *Liu*, which deals with contemporary China. The four lives and chapters of the willow are no longer recounted chronologically; rather, with many more added details, *Liu* consists of eight chapters with *three* lives and narratives of the willow alternating with each other. Each chapter is given a title which generally reflects classical Chinese poetic sensibility as well as Chinese superstition: “Willow” 柳, “Ghost”

鬼, “Zither” 琴, “Immortal” 仙人, “Dignitary” 贵人, “Sword” 剑, “Worldly man” 俗人, “Moon” 月亮. More references to “willow” are supplemented across the chapters, effectively creating a leitmotif that sustains the seemingly fragmented structure and enhances the transhistoricity of individual narratives. For example, the venue *Liu Xiang Ge* (literally “the pavilion of willow scent”) features in two different storylines: one is located in the southwestern highlands during the Qing (55), the other refers to the study room located in Beijing in the Ming (101).

An interesting addition to the Chinese version is Shan’s introduction of a Chinese TV series called *Willow* and the discussion of its film adaptation in the narrative. This episode replaces the third chapter on the Cultural Revolution by expanding the fourth chapter of *Saule*. It may be seen as a postmodern self-reflexive and self-reflective “fourth” life of the willow in the Chinese version, as the contents of this TV series and its film adaptation revolve around the other two “ancient lives” of the willow. Nevertheless, much of this discussion is about business hype in the entertainment industry, which reflects the superficiality of commodified culture. Thus, Shan ironically names one of the chapters featuring this contemporary narrative as “worldly man”. This juxtaposition between ancient cultural heritage and its modern-day commercial exploitation implicitly expresses Shan’s critique of the prevalent consumerist attitude to tradition, art, and human relation in contemporary Chinese society. The much altered and extended ending of the Chinese version of *Cithare* is also in line with such a critique.

Compared to *Liu* and *Saule*, the formal, textual arrangements of *Luoqin* and *Cithare* resemble each other much more and come closer to a narrower view of translation. Yet, as previously mentioned, with the translators relegated to a secondary role, Shan’s extensive involvement in the translation process as the “reviewer” (审校) almost guarantees important elements of adaptation and rewriting in the Chinese version. This is, on the one hand, because bilingual writers are known to be “particulièrement sceptiques

face aux traductions réalisées vers leur langue maternelle” (Gentes, 2016, 89). On the other hand, these writers’ adaptive and recreative act embodies their wish to, in Jan Hokenson’s words (on self-translation) (2013, 56), “remain in *active* relationship with the first literary language, its legacies and its readers”. In this collaboration between Shan and her Chinese translators,

l’écrivain conserve un pouvoir de légitimation indiscutable, présent dans toutes les formes de collaboration traductive. Sa conscience “intentionnante”, s’accompagne du désir irrépensible “*to revise and reshape*” (“de réviser et de remanier”) son œuvre et de l’aspiration à élargir son lectorat potentiel: la traduction se transforme ainsi en écriture seconde. (Sperti, 2016, 143; Bassnett, 2013, 287)

An enhanced intertextuality is brought to the foreground in Shan’s Chinese *revision*. For example, the “original” lyrical text of 玉树后庭花 (literally “the jade-green trees and the flowers in the backyard”), a supposedly contemporary work of the Chen dynasty, is inserted in *Luoqin* (41).⁹ When describing la Mère’s thoughts on the imperial jade seal (*Cithare*, chap. 5 under “An 423”), the Chinese version supplements an extensive recap of the historical and literary allusion (283 BC) behind the Chinese idiom 完璧归赵 (literally “returning the jade intact to the State of Zhao”), as well as other historical anecdotes about the royal seal from the Han (206 BC - 220 AD) to the Jin (265-420) dynasties (*Luoqin*, 207-208). As if to further highlight the historicity and the literary and cultural authenticity of the novelistic texture, Shan (and/or her Chinese collaborators) at one point renders an entire passage—an official document of accusation at the royal court—from French to *classical* Chinese, followed by an additional *intralingual* translation of this passage into modern Chinese (*Cithare*, chap. 5 under “An 423”; *Luoqin*, 209-210).¹⁰

In many ways, such transhistorical and translingual narratives as *Saule/Liu* and *Cithare/Luoqin* can be seen as Shan’s

creative response to one of the most popular literary genres in contemporary China known as *chuanyue* (literally “crossing”) novels substantially developed since the 1990’s, commonly (but inaccurately) translated as “time-travel novels”. In short, the protagonist of a *chuanyue* novel is usually a modern man or woman who accidentally travels back to a specific historical period and uses their modern thinking and sensibility to re-experience a highly fictionalised history, often through their interaction with real historical figures.¹¹ The TV adaptations of the *chuanyue* novels have proven to be even more popular—a detail that is explicitly elaborated on in *Liu*.¹² Different from many of these stereotypical patterns, there is no “time machine” or “mystical incident” to turn back time in Shan’s transhistorical narratives. For Shan, the most fruitful way to re-experience history is by exploring “eternal” art, hence her tenacious poeticisation of the reincarnated willow and the mythical zither. The point of *chuanyue* is not about escaping the present or applying modern logic and feelings to solve the problems of the past; rather, it should necessitate an epistemic and artistic effort to rediscover and recuperate the past and demonstrate how such an operation could deepen and enrich our modern sensibility and experience of culture. If writing Chinese narratives in French provides Shan with the necessary aesthetic and critical distance to harness creativity, rewriting them in Chinese offers Shan a refreshing opportunity both to engage with contemporary Chinese social trends and to be re-assimilated to ancient cultural traditions. Writing, then, becomes a constant movement of *cross*-cultural self-representation, an actualisation of autoexoticism which, as Li (2017, 395) comments, “reveals the fascinating and intriguing distance between the self and self, for we realize that the self, like culture, is multiple and created through diverse discourses, and that self-perception originates from others’ perception of oneself”.

In the past decade or so, there have been calls to identify Franco-Chinese literature as an emerging literary genre (Détrie, 2004; Bisinger, 2015) mainly revolving around the theme of

intercultural encounter and exchange between China and France. However, in this article, I have slightly shifted the focus by devoting more attention to the “translingual imagination” (Kellman, 2000) and the cross-cultural transformativity inherent in Shan’s (re)creative process. The back and forth mediation of both cultural and linguistic translations, the recycling, reinvention, and recontextualisation of clichés, and the engagement with contemporary social trends as well as re-assimilation into traditions, all manifest a (re)creative energy channeled through a strong notion of autoexoticism. Perhaps we should also put more emphasis on the role of a bilingual reader—like Shan’s collaborative translators and myself—in the perception, appreciation, and even making of such a Franco-Chinese aesthetic in an increasingly global literary context. What we see in Shan’s cross-cultural and translingual (re)creative model is fundamentally a form of autotranslation without originals. To some extent, this sophisticated way of doing and reading “translation” echoes Edwin Gentzler’s (2017, 8) advocacy of the term “post-translation”: “rather than thinking about translation as a somewhat secondary process of ferrying ideas across borders, we instead think about translation as one of the most important processes that can lead to revitalizing culture, a proactive force that continually introduces new ideas, forms or expressions, and pathways for change”. The different versions of the “same” novel produce an *intra*- rather than *intertextual* composition. For the transcultural writer (and reader), this intricately woven pattern of (re)creation reflects the aesthetic of the Chinese knot, literally “the joining of two cords” (Chen, 2003, 14). Double-layered, symmetrical in appearance, replete with folk symbolism, it is crafted with infinite combinations and variations without any clear sense of beginning or end.

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¹In this article, I employ the qualifier “transhistorical” primarily to describe the kind of narratives that span a significant number of historical periods, often accompanied by some mystical or supernatural elements such as ghost

and reincarnation. Occasionally, especially in the context of art objects, “transhistorical” can also be understood as “eternal” or “universal”, and unbound by any particular historical context. Finally, as I will discuss later in detail, Shan’s transhistorical narratives are related to a contemporary Chinese literary genre known as *chuanyue xiaoshuo* (literally “crossing novel”, or sometimes translated in English as “time-travel novel”).

² I follow Steven Kellman’s (2000, ix) formulation of literary translingualism as ‘the phenomenon of authors who write in more than one language’. Likewise, I use the word ‘transcultural’ advisedly as different from ‘cross-cultural’: whereas the latter merely describes the movement and exchange between divergent cultural entities, the former implies a more active conjunction and blending of differences, a cultural attitude to and an artistic responsibility for the promotion of more harmonious ways of understanding our contemporary cultural order. See Alex Hughes (2007, 9), Noémí Pereira-Ares (2015, 447-478), and Wolfgang Welsch (1999, 200).

³ This ‘adventurous spirit’, according to the German-Japanese writer Yoko Tawada, is what distinguishes exophone literature from migrant or diasporic literature (cited in Yiu, 2016, 234).

⁴ *Shuowen Jiezi* 说文解字 is an early 2nd-century Chinese dictionary from the Han dynasty. This is the entry for *zhao*: “照，明也”. Incidentally, Zhao is also the name that Empress Wu gave herself, and she is said to have specifically created a new homonymic character *zhao* 曁 for herself, with an added character component at the bottom meaning “sky/le ciel” (which also features in the cited passage). Shan has produced a calligraphic work of *zhao* 曁 for the cover of her novel.

⁵ These words are borrowed from James Parakilas’s (1998, 139) comment on Spanish music.

⁶ Let’s be clear, regardless of any aesthetic and stylistic issues in the Chinese versions, there is an extremely favourable climate of reception for Chinese writers who possess a Western profile in contemporary China. See Lovell (2012) for a sociological and historical discussion of this phenomenon.

⁷ For example, Shan’s *La Porte de la paix céleste* (1997), the narrative of which takes place against the backdrop of the Events of Tiananmen in 1989, still remains unavailable in Chinese today. Even the title of this novel is rarely mentioned in the Chinese media coverage of Shan.

⁸ Oustinoff is commenting on Nabokov and Beckett’s autotranslation. See Oustinoff (2001, 123).

⁹ Interestingly, this inserted text is in fact a popularly *misquoted* version of the original musical piece, with two extra poetic lines added in modern time.

¹⁰ Again, one may wonder which text should be seen as the “original” in this case. Indeed, they could *all* be treated as translations.

¹¹ For a useful overview of this literary genre in contemporary China, see Li Fuzhen’s master’s dissertation (2013).

¹² In fact, the huge popularity and influence of these TV dramas have drawn severe criticism from Communist officials because of the deliberate “distortions” of history in these productions. See Meng (22/09/2011).

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