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# Pablo Neruda in contemporary China: Translation between national and international politics (1949–1979)

I

From the 1950s to the 1970s in mainland China, the Latin American poets that people were most familiar with were undoubtedly José Martí and Pablo Neruda. As Neruda was a contemporary poet, as well as one of the leaders of the Chilean Communist Party, he had been invited to visit New China twice. For this reason, he was known in the 1950s to the Chinese not only as a poet, but also as a rather influential political figure. Actually, Neruda was on Chinese soil three times. The first was in 1928 when he visited Hong Kong and Shanghai in route to Rangoon, to take up the position of honorary consul. Yet the impression he had of old China was not favourable. In his autobiography he wrote: “That China was a colony ruled with an iron hand – a paradise of gamblers, opium smokers, brothels, nighttime muggers, phony Russian duchesses, sea and land pirates” (Neruda 2001: 236)<sup>1</sup>. What was even more unforgettable for Neruda was being robbed in Shanghai. After he and a friend had made the rounds at six or seven night clubs, they each hired a rickshaw to go back to their hotel. In the rainy night the rickshaw drivers brought them to a suburb and stole their clothes and all their money, only leaving them with their passports and documents. That experience caused Neruda to compare Shanghai in his poem “Cantando a la tierra y al pueblo de China” to a “wicked woman” or “an old woman with wrinkles all over her face / so poor that she had nothing / holding an empty bowl / standing at the main entrance of a temple”<sup>2</sup>.

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1 “Aquella era una China férreamente colonizada; un paraíso de tabúres, de fumadores de opio, de prostíbulos, de asaltantes nocturnos, de falsas duquesas rusas, de piratas del mar y de la tierra” (Neruda 1980: 327).

2 This poem was written during the time Neruda visited China in 1953. Neruda wrote it by Ding Ling’s request. It was first written in Spanish, and translated by Yuan Shuipai from English version (translated by George Leeson). Neruda’s original script could not be found, so here is the version translated by myself from the Chinese version first published in *People’s Literature*, No. 3 (1953), pp. 63–70.

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In December 1949, Neruda was appointed by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet as a member of the Stalin Peace Prize Jury. Guo Moruo (郭沫若) and French writer Louis Aragon, Neruda's good friend, were both vice-chairmen of the jury. At the time there had been frequent disagreements among the jury arising from national and personal interests. Neruda, Aragon and Ilya Ehrenburg collaborated and agreed among themselves and succeeded having the prize awarded to Pablo Picasso, Bertolt Brecht, and Spanish poet Rafael Alberti. Of course they were all anti-fascist, progressive figures, but at the same time they were also great friends of Neruda – particularly Picasso and Alberti. In 1951 Soong Chingling (宋庆龄) was awarded the prize after being nominated by Guo Moruo, the president of China Federation of Literary and Art Circles (CFLAC). In September of that year, Neruda and Ehrenburg were asked by the jury to go to Beijing and present the award, which was a gold medal engraved with Stalin's picture and an award certificate. This time, Neruda's visit to China was entirely different from the awkward trip of 1928. Neruda was the first Latin-American cultural guru to pay a special and formal visit to New China. As he and Ehrenburg had come to present the award to Soong Chingling, who was vice-president of PRC at that time, they were received with much ceremony. On the afternoon of September 15<sup>th</sup>, Soong Chingling, Guo Moruo and Mao Dun (茅盾), president of the China Writers Association went to the airport to greet them in person. During their stay in China, almost all the state leaders of New China met with Neruda and Ehrenburg, these included Premier Zhou Enlai (周恩来), Vice President Liu Shaoqi (刘少奇), Zhu De (朱德) and others. Although they did not get the chance to meet Chairman Mao, they felt somewhat flattered by the level of the official reception. During the banquet, Neruda came to know Ai Qing (艾青), the extraordinary political lyric poet in socialist China, who he described as "charming" (2001: 208)<sup>3</sup>, "his broad dark features, his large eyes brimming with mischief and kindness, his quick intelligence" (2001: 231)<sup>4</sup>, all these qualities had made Neruda ecstatic. During the trip, Ai Qing had accompanied Neruda on sightseeing tours to the Fragrant Hill and Summer Palace. They went on to sample court dishes together at the latter.

In 1952 Neruda's exile ended and he returned to Chile. A year later he himself received the Stalin Peace Prize. In 1954 Neruda turned 50, and he invited many good friends from around the world to come celebrate, taking the opportunity to hold a gathering of the Left-wing cultural arena and intellectual arena, and call for the defense of peace. Those in attendance were Neruda's closest friends in

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<sup>3</sup> "encantador" (Neruda 1980: 28).

<sup>4</sup> "su ancho rostro moreno, sus grandes ojos llenos de picardía y bondad, su inteligencia despierta" (Neruda 1980: 321).

the cultural field, including Ehrenburg, Jan Drda of Czechoslovakia, from Latin America Miguel Angel Asturias, Oliverio Girondo, Norah Lange, Elvio Romero among others. China regarded this event as very important, and sent a delegation led by Xiao San and Ai Qing. They brought boxes of presents including ivory carvings, Hunan embroidery, cloisonné jars, and other valuable items. At the time the Pacific route was not yet opened, and to travel from China to Chile it was necessary to go via Europe and Africa. Since China did not have diplomatic relations with most European and African countries at the time, it took Ai Qing a grueling eight days to fly to Santiago. During the trip, one box of presents was lost in transit. Ai Qing recalled later that the reason for bringing such valuable items as birthday presents for Neruda was in order to open up connections – which is to say to use Neruda’s enormous reputation and widespread influence as a vehicle for opening up civilian diplomatic channels<sup>5</sup>. Ai Qing himself gave two paintings by the master of Chinese traditional painting Qi Baishi (齐白石) to Neruda. Neruda also made it a point to buy several bull horn cups as presents for Ai Qing as well as for the Chinese translator of his poems, Yuan Shuipai (袁水拍). Xiao San and Ai Qing stayed in Chile for a month. Neruda often entertained them in his Isla Negra home. He introduced Ai Qing to his Chilean friends, saying that Ai was his long-time friend, the only Chinese descended from the times of Qu Yuan (屈原)<sup>6</sup>. Ai Qing asked him “when will you visit China again?” He said with tears in his eyes: “I don’t know, Ai Qing. There are many difficulties and it is not easy to get away. It has to be another two or three years”<sup>7</sup>. During his stay with Neruda, Ai Qing enjoyed his sincere and generous friendship. Ai Qing had also seen how the Chilean people loved Neruda. On 13<sup>th</sup> August 1954, Ai Qing’s team bid farewell to Santiago and went back to China. During his stay in Chile and after going back home, Ai Qing wrote his most outstanding poems of the 50’s, such as “Vienna” and the long poem “On the Chilean Strait – to Pablo Neruda”, as well as the set of poems “The Trip to South America”. In “On the Chilean Strait – to Pablo Neruda”, he writes: “You love the sea, I too love the sea / forever we shall navigate the sea”, expressing a sense of deep mutual appreciation. After saying farewell to Neruda at the airport, Ai Qing wrote on the flight “Farewell”, “With one ‘goodbye’ / no fixed date for reunion”. The sadness of departure and longing filled the lines<sup>8</sup>.

In August of 1956, Neruda invited the Chinese Cultural Delegation to visit Chile and perform. Not only did he personally go to the Santiago airport to greet

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5 See Ai Qing 1980.

6 Qu Yuan is the first romantic poet in China’s literary history.

7 Ai Qing 2004: 245.

8 See Guangwei 1999: 423–427.

them, but he also invited the delegation's leader, Chu Tunan (楚图南) and others to his seaside home for lunch. Standing on the shore in front of the delegation, he shouted "China, Xiao San, Ai Qing" towards the sea, again and again<sup>9</sup>.

The last time Neruda visited China was in 1957. Accompanying him were Brazilian left-wing writer Jorge Amado and Amado's wife. This time, Ai Qing went to Kunming in Yunnan to greet the group that was flying in from Burma. He took them sightseeing at Dianchi Lake and Shilin, the stone forest. They then flew to Chongqing and cruised down the Yangtze River, passing by the Three Gorges and Hankou, and finally went to Beijing. Ai Qing again presented a favourite Qi Baishi painting to Neruda. It was said that Neruda had made a special trip to visit Old Master Baishi. The latter did a painting for him on the spot of two agile small chickens fighting for an earthworm. He added the lines: "Call friends in the future – to Mr. Neruda, painted by Old Baishi at the age of 93". When Old Baishi put down his brushes, Neruda was so moved that he broke out in tears, and he embraced the Master<sup>10</sup>.

The era was that of the anti-Right movement in China. The situation was sensitive among the senior echelon of Beijing's cultural arena, where there prevailed a sense of "Storm is coming". Although Ding Ling (丁玲) was Vice-Chairperson of the Chinese Writers Association, a denouncement against her was already in the works. Earlier in the autumn of 1951, Ding Ling had received Neruda and was with him and Ehrenburg when they visited Shanghai and Hangzhou. She also made an official Welcome Speech to Ehrenburg and Neruda, in which she called Neruda a "Chilean poet as well as our poet" (Ling 2001: 264). Neruda considered her as one of his great Chinese friends. As for Ding Ling, it was certainly a happy occasion to reunite with an old friend, but further, having been assigned as the host of the banquet for Neruda, seemed to imply that her political situation had cleared up. She paid special attention to her makeup and put on an elegant silver-grey dress for the banquet. After returning home, she joyously described the scenes at the meal to her son, describing the conversation with Neruda among other things<sup>11</sup>. However, according to Guo Xiaochuan's (郭小川) diary, Guo had met Neruda's group in Ai Qing's home on 16<sup>th</sup> July around 5 PM. At 6:30, Ai Qing invited everyone to Kang Le's (康乐)<sup>12</sup> for dinner. After finishing their meal at around 8, Guo Xiaochuan went to Zhou Yang's place. Zhou Yang (周扬), the vice minister of the Propaganda Department discussed three issues with him. The first was

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<sup>9</sup> See Wan Guang 1956: 29.

<sup>10</sup> See Huang Yongyu 1992.

<sup>11</sup> See Jiang Zulin 1998.

<sup>12</sup> A family's private restaurant in Beijing, which was well known for its imperial dishes.

the denouncing of Zhong Dianfei (钟惦棐), a film critic. The second was Geyang (戈杨) at “The New Observer” (新观察) and the third issue was that of Ding Ling and Chen Qi Xia (陈启霞) which they decided would be worked on the following week (Xiaochuan 2000: 148).

Ding Ling and Ai Qing, Neruda’s best Chinese friends who had welcomed him did not get the chance to bid him farewell. They were criticized and purged by the Party and their peers as alike, because they were found to be rightist during the Anti-Rightist Movement of 1957. The morning before Neruda’s departure, Ai Qing and his wife Gao Ying went to the Beijing hotel where Neruda was staying to say goodbye. Ai Qing told Neruda: “I have been involved in the Anti-Rightist Movement and probably will not be allowed to see you off” (Ying 2007: 296). Neruda did not understand what had happened. Ai Qing, not knowing how to phrase it in French, stomped his foot on the floor and made a gesture of blowing wind with his hands, meaning approaching disaster like earthquake or storm. Neruda finally understood the horrible situation that Ai Qing was facing. They were about to discuss it, but a telephone call came saying that a Minister wanted to come and see Neruda. Ai Qing immediately guessed that it was Zhou Yang, who he could not let see him there. Although Neruda could not understand the intricacies of the situation, he hugged Ai Qing in a strong embrace, and told Ai Qing that he hoped to see him again. The two hastily said goodbye. The person who came was indeed Zhou Yang and he told Neruda the news of Ai Qing’s denouncement. Neruda was very angry and he made a protest on the spot. Ultimately, Ai Qing was still not among the group who came to see him off from Beijing. Neruda said he left with a mouthful of bitterness. That bitterness could still be sensed many years later. Since that day, not only did they not meet again, but Ai Qing would never again read Neruda’s poetry.

## II

Pablo Neruda’s work has been translated into Chinese since 1948. In the 15<sup>th</sup> issue of *World Affairs* (世界知识)<sup>13</sup> a translation by Bai Yuan (柏园) appeared of “Chilean Poet Pablo Neruda’s Open Letter”. This is the earliest known Chinese translation of Neruda’s writings. The open letter may have been Neruda’s “The Crisis of Democracy in Chile is a Dramatic Warning for Our Continent”, published

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<sup>13</sup> *World Affairs* is a famous magazine covering international politics and culture. It was founded in 1934 in China.

in Venezuela's *EI Nacional* on November 27<sup>th</sup>, 1947. In this article, Neruda exposed the crimes of the Videla government. On January 6<sup>th</sup>, 1948 Neruda made his last speech in the Congress, "Yo acuso", after which he was stripped of his position as senator. On February 5<sup>th</sup>, a warrant was issued for his arrest. From then on, Neruda had to go into hiding, and in 1949 he fled Chile by land over the Andes. In April 1949, the anti-fascist cultural movement and intellectual movement met in Paris at the The World Congress of Partisans for Peace. In a miraculous fashion, Neruda unexpectedly appeared at the closing ceremony on the last day. The delegates to the Congress who had been worried about him rushed to embrace him. His appearance shattered the rumor spread by the Videla government that Neruda was still in Chile under siege by the Chilean police. American writer Howard Fast later wrote the article, "I Met Neruda in Paris", a translation of which was published in the 21<sup>st</sup> issue of China's *World Affairs* Periodical in 1949. This article is the second time that Neruda's work was translated into Chinese.

After the founding of New China, Neruda was translated from time to time, and after his visit with greater frequency. Neruda was portrayed to the Chinese people of the 1950s era as part of the political concepts of left-wing, progressiveness, struggle, anti-fascism, and so on. This tradition in interpretation has directly impacted Socialist China's acceptance, translation and interpretation of Neruda from the 1950s to the 1970s. In 1950, the poem "Let the Rail Splitter Awake" ("Que despierte el leñador") was translated by the famous satirist Yuan Shuipai (袁水拍), who was also in charge of the English translation of Chairman Mao's poems. This was the first publication of Neruda's poems in Chinese, published by Shanghai's Xin Qun Publishing in 1950, as one of the "Xin Qun Poem Series". In order to welcome Neruda's visit in 1951, *Selected Works of Neruda* was translated by Yuan Shuipai and published by the People's Literature Publishing House, the most important official literature publisher in China. The fine edition features illustrations by Neruda's friend José Venturelli and went into four printings within three years. "Que despierte el leñador" and *Selected Works of Neruda* were among the most popular books of foreign poems translated and published in 1950s in China. Neruda was the first Latin American poet to have visited China. He was being persecuted by the anti-Communist Chilean government and in exile at the time and had always been anti-fascist and against US-led imperialism. More importantly, he was a member of the Chilean Communist Party and one of their leaders. At the time, the work of Communist writers would not only be affirmed ideologically, but also rated highly in terms of artistic achievement. Because of this, the newly-established socialist China was willing to introduce and publicize Neruda with its substantial effort. The introduction of Neruda essentially emphasized Neruda as Latin America's conscience, a fighter, a soldier for peace, and the people's poet.

In the 1950s, the earliest articles published on Neruda's life and writings were by his friend, the Soviet writer Ehrenburg. The Chinese translation of his article "Pablo Neruda" was published in the second issue of volume two of *Translation Monthly*, which appeared on February 1<sup>st</sup>, 1950. In this article, Ehrenburg critiqued Neruda's work from the perspective of poetry writing. He believed the reason that Neruda could come to represent Latin American's art of poetry was because his poems had inherited the great traditions of both Castilian poetry and Chilean folk songs, and had also absorbed European (especially French) symbolist techniques and spiritual heritage, while simultaneously carrying the passion of Walt Whitman and Vladimir Mayakovsky. Ehrenburg felt that Neruda had by coincidence arrived on the poetic scene at the time when *modernismo* had arrived at a dead end in Latin America. His fresh and simple style, the use of nature imagery, novel imagining, and a richness in tone, had distinguished Neruda's voice from the field. In talking about Neruda's passion for Mayakovsky, Ehrenburg pointed out that what had moved the young Neruda was not Mayakovsky's poems during the Soviet Union Socialist establishment era, but the brightness, creativity, thunderous tone, sensitivity as well as agitating poetic power of his earlier work.

As compared to this, the introduction to the biography *Neruda* written by Volodia Teitelboim and Vera Kuteyschikova more clearly displayed the markings of time and ideology. The former was also a writer besides being General Secretary of the Chilean People's Front. His relation with Neruda was quite special. After Neruda's death, he wrote the highly authoritative biography *Neruda*. In 1952, he came to China to attend the Pacific Asia Peace Conference. During that period, he was invited by *The New Observer* magazine to write "Neruda's Battling Road". In this paper, Teitelboim asserted that Neruda was a member of the People because of his family background. He also included Neruda's early love poems as "resistance poems". Teitelboim believed that the Spanish Civil War and the expansion of fascism had driven Neruda to complete the transition from resistor to revolutionary. His poems became weapons that cried out on behalf of the people. Although he was persecuted by imperialists and their lackeys, this led to his becoming the favorite poet of the Chilean people. He was the "people's poet, passionate revolutionary, ambassador of peace, great singer who sang the praise of Soviet Union, China and other people's democratic countries [...] he led Latin America's intellectuals to find their true path", and therefore, "his achievement in this respect was greater than any Latin American writers" (Teitelboim 1952: 26–28). Kuteyschikova's *Pablo Neruda* was originally published in the Soviet Union's "Star" magazine in May 1949. The Chinese translator (Sun Wei, 孙玮) found it to be the most comprehensive introduction of Neruda's life work at the time with the exception of Ehrenburg's writings. That article also correlated

Neruda's literary work with his political life, stressing Neruda's connection to the struggle and the people, focusing on his anti-fascist and anti-imperialist stance, as well as emphasizing that he was a friend of the Soviet Union<sup>14</sup>. Afterwards, the introduction articles written in China essentially carried on in this vein rather than following Ehrenburg's stance. In 1957, to welcome Neruda to China again, the Writers Publishing House had further translated and published *Pablo Neruda's Biography* co-authored by Kuteyschikova and Adam Livovitch Stein.

In terms of translating Neruda, the most important Chinese translators during the 1950s–1970s era were Yuan Shuipai, Zou Jiang (邹绎), Wang Yangle (王央乐), Sun Wei (孙玮) and Chen Yongyi (陈用仪). In general, Yuan would re-translate from English translations, Zou from English or Russian, Sun mainly from Russian, and Wang and Chen directly from the original Spanish. Yuan Shuipai was one of the earliest and most famous Chinese translators of Neruda. According to him, the first time he came across Neruda's poems was in 1944 when he read the book *United Nations' Poetry Selection* in which was the poem "Almería" appeared. Yuan said it was one of the few short poems that had touched him the most. He translated it into Chinese right away but knew nothing about the author. In 1947 he read "Los muertos de la plaza", and in 1949 he read the poem "Que despierte el leñador". On the strength of Neruda's poems, he made a note to collect relevant biographical material in order to gain an understanding of Neruda's character and his militant life. Their similar political stance had deepened Yuan's acceptance of Neruda. In January 1950, his translation of "Que despierte el leñador" was published and was the first Chinese translation of Neruda's poetry. In the same year he met Neruda in Warsaw during the Defense of World Peace Congress, and again saw him at the ceremony where Neruda awarding the International Peace Council's International Peace Prize. Returning to China, Yuan Shuipai wrote the article, "Fighter for Peace – Neruda the Poet". Later he translated "El fugitivo". Along with "Los muertos de la plaza" and "Que despierte el leñador", it was included the collection *Canto General*, which consisted of Neruda's lyrical political poems. In 1951, to welcome Neruda to China, Yuan had translated a selection of these and published *Neruda's Poetry Collection*. At the time 12,100 copies were printed, 100 of which were elegant thread-sewn copies, 10,000 pocket-size, and 2000 roughly A4 size. The title, in calligraphy, was done by Guo Morou (郭沫若). The introduction was written by Czechoslovakian writer F.C. Weiskopf, who was then Czechoslovakia's ambassador to China. Venturelli had provided photos of Neruda as well as pictures he himself had drawn. Also included were pictures

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<sup>14</sup> See Kuteyschikova 1950 (the Chinese version was translated by Sun Wei).

other Latin American artists had drawn. From 1951 to 1954, this book was printed four times.

The poems translated by Yuan Shuipai were basically Neruda's political poems, mostly translated from English translations published in the American *Masses and Mainstream* magazine. Besides him, other translators also worked only with political poems, such as "El fugitivo", "Las uvas y el viento", "Canción de gesta" as well as "España en mi corazón". "El fugitivo" was a description of Neruda's life in exile pursuant to the political oppression he encountered. "Las uvas y el viento" collected Neruda's poems that paid tributes to China and the Soviet Union. "Canción de gesta" was dedicated to the Cuban Revolution, and it had a Chinese translation less than a year of its original publication. Out of all these work, the one that had greatest impact on China was "Que despierte el leñador", the important reason for this being that this long poem had predicted the certain failure of the U.S.A. and supported the Chiang Kai Shek government. This made it particularly favored in New China. Furthermore, this poem was indeed one of the best among Neruda's lyrical political poems.

### III

After reviewing the translation history of Pablo Neruda in 20<sup>th</sup> century China, the real agenda behind this research may be revealed. It is an effort to describe the role that national and international politics have played in Socialist China's translation history of Latin American Literature. This point is to be divided into three parts for clarity.

First, because of the Cold War, developing relations with Asian, African, and Latin American countries became more and more important for New China. With the aim of striking back against the blockades of the United States, Chinese leaders implemented "people to people" diplomacy toward Sino-Latin American relations in the early days of New China. Thus, translating Latin American literature and interacting with their poets could be a very effective way of developing non-government diplomacy. For example, when Neruda went to visit New China in 1950, the host showed warm and extraordinary hospitality. Premier Zhou Enlai told him that he was "the first swallow in the spring of friendship between China and Latin America" (Zhiliang 2004: 55). He also discussed with Neruda the possibility of helping China invite a large group of Latin American intellectuals and artists to Beijing for a meeting. Neruda not only promised to do so, but also recommended his friend José Venturelli to Zhou to help prepare the meeting. In October 1952, with Pablo Neruda and Venturelli's positive contact, more than 150 representatives from 11 Latin American countries attended the Asia-Pacific

Peace Conference in Beijing. It represented a great diplomatic achievement in the history of New China. Just as China's expected, Neruda also actively mediated between Chile and China. Chile was the first country in South America to start bilateral trade relations with China in 1953 and establish a diplomatic relationship in 1970. All of this would hardly have been possible without Neruda's efforts. In addition, Premier Zhou Enlai instructed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to establish a Spanish major in Chinese universities in order to welcome the representatives from Latin America. So the establishment of Spanish studies in China also took China's diplomatic and political needs into consideration.

Stimulated by the victory of the Cuban Revolution in 1959, China suddenly had strong ties to Cuba and potentially other Latin American countries in turn. Consequently, in order to meet the requirements of national diplomacy, higher education institutions with majors in Spanish continued to emerge and expand all around China. Moreover, 1959 was the peak year of translating and publishing Latin American works between the 1950s–1970s. Neruda's every poem or essay on the Cuban Revolution was translated into Chinese and published in the most important official media like the *People's Daily*. During this era, not only was Spanish-teaching performed for political purposes, but also translations were closely associated with political action – essentially, Latin American literary works represented by Cuban literature were seen as “revolutionary literature” in China.

Like the cow that gives a good pail of milk and then kicks it over, Chinese translation of Latin American literature, which had been favored by international politics in the 1950s, later hit a pronounced low point because of the drastic change of the international situation. From the mid-1950s to 1964, the Sino-Soviet relationship evolved from the stage of “differences” into “split”. On this issue, the Communist Parties of Cuba and twenty-two other Latin American countries tried to mediate between China and the Soviet Union, but eventually failed. From then on, the Communist parties of Latin America were divided between the PRC and the USSR, splitting into two communities, one Pro-China and the other Pro-Soviet. Accordingly, only the left-wing writers of the Pro-China community could be introduced into mainland China; the others would be kept out of Chinese readers' sight. For instance, Pablo de Rokha was regarded as a member of the Pro-China community, while Pablo Neruda was evaluated as a negative character who held the viewpoint of Soviet revisionism. In July 1964, Pablo de Rokha was invited to visit China. Travelling widely, he wrote more than fifty poems in praise of China, Mao Zedong, and the Great Leap Forward. On the other hand, from 1964, neither Pablo Neruda nor his works appeared in China's media, despite his previous substantial contributions to “people-to-people” communications between China and Latin America. Even after the September 11<sup>th</sup> coup happened in Chile

in 1973, and Neruda died, the official media didn't say a word to condemn Pinochet's military *coup d'état* or to mourn Salvador Allende or Neruda. Once the most important Latin-American poet, Neruda had disappeared in the view of China. It was not until 1979, the end of the Cultural Revolution, that he and his work were permitted to return again.

Second, the translation strategy that the Chinese translators employed when translating Neruda was highly politicalized. As André Lefebvre posited<sup>15</sup>, translations are not made in a vacuum, but are a kind of rewriting, reflecting a certain ideology or poetics. Each step of the translating process such as selection, translation itself, publishing, bookselling, and literature review, is controlled and organized by the nation. Due to manipulation of literature and translation, the Chinese translation of Latin American literature from the 1950–1970s was synchronized with national politics. More particularly, the country made a clear distinction between “translatable” and “untranslatable” writers and works of foreign literature. Thus, only revolutionary and left-wing literary works could be introduced into mainland China. Several left-wing writers and intellectuals of Latin American who expressed sympathy for the Chinese revolution were invited to visit mainland China. Besides Neruda and Amado, Nicolás Guillen, Miguel Ángel Asturias, and Alejo Carpentier were also invited to visit China. Some of the left-wing intellectuals even worked in China as Spanish teachers. Although the writers who were introduced into China had varying literary styles – even works written by the same author are of course not static – Chinese translation of Latin-American literature focused merely on the works which were anti-imperialistic, and anti-authoritarian, works that praised the Soviet Union, China, and Socialism, and also those that supported the Cuban Revolution. For instance, some of Neruda's poems with themes of lust, obscurity, indifference, and surrealism were totally suppressed. Only the parts of his poems expressing the fighting spirit, or being filled with righteous indignation were “selected” for Chinese readers. Neruda's inquiry on the themes of *americanidad*, history, poetry, identity, and desire were often undervalued. For example, all of the poems selected for *Neruda's Poetry* published in 1951 were political poems and political speeches given after the Spanish Civil War.

Third, although this paper has examined China's translation and reception of Pablo Neruda in the years ranging from 1949 to 1979 – known as the Mao Era or the Era of Socialist Construction – from the perspective of translation studies, and has discussed the complicated and subtle relationship between translation and politics, translation and ideology, an attempt is still being made to avoid

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<sup>15</sup> See Lefebvre 1992.

the way of thinking which contrasts translation and politics or literature and politics. Especially important is to oppose the consideration of the local history of translation with a mere transplanting of the theory of ideological manipulation on top of it. Through deep historical research and the representation of the complicated connection between translation and politics, I found there truly exist what Raymond Williams terms “Structures of Feeling”. For example, some part of Neruda still survived and emerged through the translation practice’s misreading, rewriting, adapting and editing of his work. In fragments and instances, one could still feel the heterogeneity between Neruda’s poetry and the socialist realism. So it was not only because of the official ideology, but also due to the quality of Neruda’s poems themselves, that Chinese versions of Neruda’s work were printed in more than 83,000 copies<sup>16</sup>. Neruda was able to become the icon of Latin-American modern poetry in Chinese readers’ eyes, because they loved his poems in their hearts.

## IV

After the Cultural Revolution, Neruda came back into view of Chinese readers. But the new translations were not as free as one might imagine. The Cold War had ended, but other ideologies took hold, such as de-politicization and globalization. For example, the first poem translated into Chinese after the Cultural Revolution was “Tu Risa”. This was the first time that Chinese readers got the chance to see, through the poem, some of Neruda’s personal and romantic life. From then on, more and more love poems were translated. In 1996, in the wake of the Oscar-nominated film *The Postman*, Neruda again came into view for the Chinese. The film talked about Neruda’s life during exile, living on the Island of Capri in Italy. He taught the island’s postman who delivered his letters to write love poems, and to pursue love. After the release of the film, Neruda’s love poems became a hit in translation and publication. In particular, *Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair* was widely translated. The Chinese readers discovered suddenly that Neruda actually described sex with exquisiteness and feeling. As result, in *Selected poems of Pablo Neruda*, published in 2003, there were no political poems included. Today, Neruda is considered as a master of poetry and a Nobel Laureate

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<sup>16</sup> At that time, Chinese people were so poor that they had no habit to buy books from the bookstore. Most people borrowed books from public libraries, or from those who had the money or the right to own books. So a book that could be sold more than a 10,000 times had to be considered extremely popular.

in China. However, his life of struggle for the Chilean people, democracy, and world peace have been intentionally obscured and forgotten.

In sum, this essay takes the translation history of Pablo Neruda during the socialist China era (1949–1979) as a case, and uncovers the various kinds of misreading and rewriting in the process of translation and reception. It is designed to discuss the complicated and subtle relationship between translation and national/international politics, translation and ideology. By revealing the close literary and political connection and interaction between China and Latin-American countries, the essay attempts to find new ways of thinking and understanding the global literary history during the Cold War period<sup>17</sup>.

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17 See further discussions in Wei Teng 2011.

