Yun Wu, *Contemporary Chinese Novels in Translation since 1978. Literary Voices from the Periphery*, New York: Routledge, 2024.

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After the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), the Reform and Opening-Up initiated in 1978 defined the ideological directive of liberating thought. As a result, modern Chinese literature, whose development had been interrupted by the Cultural Revolution, gradually deviated from politics and achieved a revival that reflected the new political, economic, and cultural systems. This book provides a panoramic study of the translation into English of contemporary Chinese novels, focusing on the period since the demise of the Cultural Revolution.

In general terms, the translation activities of this new historical period are studied from three dimensions — space, time, and practice — and are marked by two characteristics: on the one hand, the variety of translated literature: scar literature, avant-garde literature, root-seeking literature, women's and feminist literature, etc.; on the other hand, the important role played by translation, as it serves to introduce Chinese literature to the world and to enrich global literature with Chinese characteristics. At the same time, the author also analyses the various elements that influence translation, such as political, economic, cultural, academic, or ideological factors, and identifies the challenges faced by translators in the new period, regarding their motives, attitudes, and adopted techniques.

After the introduction comes chapter 2, titled "Chinese Novels in English Translation: A Diachronic Overview". This chapter offers an overview of the translation activities of Chinese narrative over an extended period: from 1978 to the present. This period is primarily divided into four sub-stages, with the criteria for division based mainly on four major historical events: the initiation of Reform and Opening-Up (1978), the establishment of the socialist free-market economic system (1992), China's joining of the WTO (2001), and the proposal of the Belt and Road Initiative (2012). Within each sub-stage, translations are divided into two categories: complete translations and anthologies.

In the subsequent sections, the author provides a detailed analysis of the characteristics of translation activities at each sub-stage. First, between 1978 and 1992, most of the translated works were those that reflected the experiences of people who survived the Cultural Revolution and expressed their thoughts on this significant historical event. Therefore, most of them focused on political themes. Foreign translators during this period translated Chinese literature mainly with the curiosity to learn about China, and their motivations sometimes reflected Eurocentric, critical stereotypes about Chinese society. During the second sub-stage, from 1992 to 2000, the translated works became more diverse: there was women's literature, historical literature, literature about ethnic minorities, anti-corruption literature, romance, etc. These novels sought to reflect China's social development and the changing way of life since the Reform and Opening-Up, showing the reality of Chinese society to Western countries.

During the third sub-stage, the selected themes became even more varied; although the attention of translators and publishers remained focused on writers that had won international awards, translations of previously untranslated works began to appear, especially works by female authors. This phenomenon shows that foreign countries began to learn about Chinese literature from more diverse and comprehensive perspectives. In the final sub-stage, with the aim of strengthening the country's soft power and achieving a more central position for Chinese literature in the global literary system, Chinese publishers began collaborating with foreign publishers and co-developing projects to promote the dissemination of Chinese literature. Although historical, ethnic, and realist narratives remained dominant, works of popular literature and cyber-literature also began to spread, which demonstrates, on the one hand, that ideology, national politics, and the country's power are significant influencing factors in translation activities; on the other hand, Chinese narrative began to be disseminated in a multidimensional way, offering a better expression and interpretation of Chinese wisdom.

As for anthologies, their selection criteria reflect the personal preferences and aesthetic concepts of the translators, but also the importance of the work within the literary sphere and its reception by readers. Most of the anthologists in the first sub-stage, before 1992, were specialists from other academic fields such as history or politics, so their selection criteria were influenced by their own viewpoints: they paid more attention to social criticism than to the literary value of the selected pieces. During the second sub-stage, from 1992 to 2000, the compilers of the anthologies tended to pursue the recovery of the inherent logic of literature: they paid more attention to the literary and aesthetic value of the works and began translating lesser-known authors, especially those from ethnic minorities like Tibetans. Meanwhile, during the two most recent sub-stages, their focus has shifted more towards popular literature.

Another development made by the anthologies is the increasing importance of paratexts. During the first sub-stage, the anthologies only presented the themes, content, and main characters of the works; neither the authors nor the translators were mentioned. In the following decades, authors and translators were introduced in more detail: there were explanations linking the personal experiences of the authors with their creative styles, as well as information about the academic careers of the translators, their translation experiences, and the reasons why they had chosen a particular work to translate.

Chapter 3, "Different Patronage in Source-Initiated and Target-Initiated Translation", based on the theories of the Manipulation School, analyses how political and ideological elements and patronage influence translation activities. According to the author, there are two ways to disseminate contemporary Chinese narrative: activities initiated by Chinese publishers and those initiated by foreign publishers. Most Chinese publishers are government-directed, with various objectives: establishing a positive image of China in the world, promoting Chinese literature to achieve a more central position in the global literary system, or strengthening the country's soft power.

In the early years of the People's Republic of China, publishers and translators were controlled by political institutions. Under the initiatives of the Chinese government, numerous book collections and magazines were created to present the real social circumstances of China abroad through translation. Starting in the 1990s, more Western publishers began participating in the editing of translations of Chinese narratives. Moreover, the translated works became more diverse with the aim of showing the developments in Chinese society after the Reform and Opening-Up. However, during the 20th century, several shortcomings were evident in the process of promoting Chinese novels abroad: first, the lack of knowledge about the needs of the target language readers and the consequent inability to assess the reception of Chinese literature in the target culture; second, the lack of financial support, which led to the poor quality of translations; and third, the lack of distribution channels and tools, which prevented books from entering the major bookstores in Western countries.

Entering the 21st century, collaborations between Chinese-English publishers and translators, as well as between foreign translators and Chinese publishers, have become more frequent. As a result, most works are published by foreign publishers, which has led to these works gaining a higher level of reception in the international world. Other developments include the following: an increase in translations of popular literature and cyber-literature, the creation of various translation programs tailored to the target culture, the participation of academic publishers affiliated with foreign universities, and the emergence of publishers dedicated

exclusively to Chinese literature, such as Penguin China, China Books and Periodicals, Merwin Asia, etc.

Chapter 4, "Translation and Reception of Representative Chinese Writers", evaluates the impact of contemporary Chinese novels in the English-speaking world from three perspectives: library collection volume, frequency of appearance on the online bookstore Amazon, and reader reviews. The author considers that contemporary Chinese novels have generally received a positive reception in the English-speaking world: most works have received positive reviews from readers, and their universal literary values are recognised by literature specialists, thanks to the attention given to text revisions and growing awareness of the needs of foreign readers. However, there are also some negative aspects: the infrequency of translations archived in libraries, the lack of digital versions, the lower number of copies sold, etc.

Chapter 5, "Translating Female Voices: Gender, Politics, and Poetics", explains how the English-speaking world learns about contemporary Chinese society through women's literature. The interests are mainly attributed to Western feminism trends and focus on writers who enjoy national or international fame, such as Wang Anyi, winner of the Mao Dun Literature Prize in 2000, or Can Yue, who gained popularity in the Western world for her innovative literary style. Additionally, there has been a tendency to translate works that recount the collective memory of a generation of women through the individual experiences of the characters, such as the works of Wang Anyi, which show the changes in Shanghai over about a century through the depiction of a woman's life, offering a special perspective on understanding Chinese society. However, this chapter criticises that the Western world still receives Chinese women's literature from a "western-centric" approach: readers have paid too much attention to ideological content and ignored the literary value of the novels.

Finally, the last chapter, "Crowdsourcing Translation: A New Paradigm for Chinese Internet Literature", presents the translation of Chinese cyber-literature into English and how it functions to build China's cultural image. Cyber-literature can transcend the boundaries of traditional literature: it is aimed at the general public and poses less difficulty for reading; the stories always narrate the triumphs of the characters, thus creating a utopia where readers can escape from reality and relax. At the same time, it also presents challenges for its translators, who must apply various strategies related to computer technology to translate it.

In summary, the book provides its readers with an overview of the history of translating contemporary Chinese narrative into English since 1978 and allows them to understand the progress made in this journey.