

食人主義的必要：

蒙田《隨筆》· 林語堂《生活的藝術》· 中國性 · 文化翻譯

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本文首先介紹法國散文家蒙田的著作「隨筆」在中國的翻譯史，然後介紹深受此書影響的林語堂的「生活的藝術」（1937）以及此書是如何針對美國讀者，用英文寫作的出版背景。最後，本文試圖探討林語堂接觸過蒙田著作的可能性。通過比較「隨筆」和「生活的藝術」的風格以及主題，本文作者發現這兩本書具有許多共同點並由此推測林語堂很有可能接觸過蒙田的著作。然而，雖然林語堂運用如蒙田一樣閒適的文筆，並且像蒙田一樣經常引導讀者反思他們對外國根深蒂固的偏見，林語堂在「生活的藝術」一書中卻從未提及蒙田的大名，反而強調他的文學風格深受中國文學傳統的熏陶。林語堂為何遮掩蒙田對他的影響呢？通過研究林與他兩位美國編輯 Pearl Buck 和 Richard Walsh 的往來書信，本文作者發現其中暗示林語堂試圖迴避蒙田的原因可能是基於出版策略的考慮：掩蓋蒙田的影響使得林語堂能夠在與美國讀者產生共鳴的同時，能以正宗的中國人的身份自居。

關鍵詞：林語堂、蒙田、翻譯、文化適應

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The Importance of Cannibalism: Montaigne's *Essays* as a Vehicle for the Cultural Translation of Chineseness in Lin Yutang's *The Importance of Living*

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This article begins by tracing the history of translations of Montaigne's *Essays* into Chinese. Next it introduces Lin Yutang's *Importance of Living* (1937) and describes the circumstances under which it was published – in the United States for American readers. Third, it speculates how Lin may first have encountered the *Essays*. Stylistic and thematic evidence from within *The Importance of Living* strongly suggests that Lin knew Montaigne's work. Yet despite Lin's adoption of a Montaignien conversational tone and both authors' penchant for making readers reexamine their ingrained cultural stereotypes, Lin never mentions Montaigne as an influence. Instead, he invents for himself an indigenous Chinese literary heritage. Drawing on information regarding Lin's relationship with his American editors, Pearl Buck and Richard Walsh, I argue that the decision to suppress Montaigne's name from *The Importance of Living* may have been strategic. Omitting mention of Montaigne enabled Lin both to present himself as a truly authentic translator of Chinese culture to Americans and simultaneously to address his Western readers in a familiar and non-alienating manner.

Keywords: Lin Yutang, Montaigne, translation, cultural appropriation

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One might reasonably expect that the authors responsible for the renaissance of the essay form¹ in 1930s China would have read and absorbed the influence of *The Essays* by Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592), the author credited with having invented this genre in the West.² Yet surprisingly the earliest full translation of the *Essays* into Chinese did not appear until the 1990s. (蒙田, 潘麗珍, 王論躍, 丁步洲譯, 1997). Does this mean that the Chinese essayists of the 1930s were unaffected by Montaigne's style and ideas? Was his influence insignificant?

This article begins by briefly examining the history of early partial translations of Montaigne's *Essays* into Chinese, then turns to analyze a collection of essays by a modern Chinese writer whose prose style and thematic preoccupations manifest a "spiritual affinity" with Montaigne.³ Lin Yutang's *Importance of Living*, written in English and published in New York in 1937, tacitly draws on a range of rhetorical strategies characteristic of Montaigne's *Essays*, yet significantly it never mentions Montaigne. Instead, it accentuates Lin's Chinese ethnicity, invokes its own intellectual roots in the classical Chinese literary tradition, and touts its function as a vehicle through which contemporary American readers could acquaint themselves with an exotic foreign culture.

Lin enjoyed a distinguished career as a translator, and indeed some of his translations of Chinese literature appear in the *The Importance of Living*. Yet this book is certainly not a direct translation of Montaigne into either Chinese or English. The kind of translation most saliently evident in this work, and the type of translation with which I am chiefly concerned in this essay, is cultural translation, the transfer of concepts and values – not words alone (although words are always infused with cultural significance) – from one culture into another. Etymologically "translation" is identical to "transfer": both words derive from the Latin roots *trans*/across, and *fero, ferre, tuli, latus*/to bring or carry. Translation, then, can be construed as a "carrying across" of ideas between cultures. To the extent that *The Importance of Living* strives to introduce aspects of traditional Chinese culture and "wisdom" to an American audience, this book embodies the spirit of what we may call cultural translation.

In Lin's cultural translations, Montaigne functions not as the object being transferred but as the conveyance, the vehicle. In his effort to render Chinese culture accessible to a Western audience, Lin's choice of the medium of the personal essay genre served an accommodationalist end; it enabled him to present himself *discursively* as the embodiment of alterity, while at the same time

not alienating or seriously threatening his readership. Lin Yutang's cultivation of a Montaignian essayistic style permitted his Western readers to *feel* that they were learning about a foreign culture while simultaneously avoiding the discomfort of confronting radical difference.

If, as I shall demonstrate, Lin Yutang likely knew and was influenced by Montaigne's writings, then the question arises as to why he would not have cited this French author. That Montaigne's name never appears in *The Importance of Living* is significant, I maintain, because had he mentioned it, Lin would have risked drawing attention to his deep knowledge of Western culture. Doing so could have compromised his status as authentically Chinese, an image Lin and his editors were eager to preserve. Presenting Lin as the quintessence of Chinese culture required silencing Montaigne's name. But, as I shall argue, the omission of Montaigne's name corresponds inversely to the importance of his *Essays* for Lin's project. Although never explicitly mentioned, Montaigne's presence suffuses the text of *The Importance of Living*, and enables Lin Yutang to connect with his American audience in ways that subtly undercut and complicate his more simplistic discursive emphasis on Chineseness.

This article begins with a history of translations of Montaigne's *Essays* in to Chinese. Section two briefly introduces *The Importance of Living* and describes the circumstances under which it was published. Section three provides several speculations regarding the conditions under which Lin may first have encountered the *Essays*. Historical evidence does not conclusively indicate that Lin read the *Essays* prior to writing *The Importance of Living*; the most compelling evidence for this point derives from the stylistic and thematic similarities between the texts themselves. Thus, to enable the reader to perceive the affinities between Montaigne and Lin Yutang's texts, sections four and five introduce several distinguishing characteristics of Montaigne's writing style, notably his conversational tone and his penchant for switching perspectives so as to cause readers to reconsider their ingrained cultural stereotypes. Sections six through eight reveal that Lin's writing exhibits many of the same features as Montaigne's. Yet despite the strong correspondences between the two authors' styles, Lin never openly acknowledges the French author's influence; indeed, he invents for himself an indigenous Chinese literary heritage. Finally, section nine argues, drawing on information regarding Lin's relationship with his American editors, that the decision to suppress Montaigne's name may have been strategic; omitting mention of Montaigne enabled Lin both to present himself as a truly authentic translator of Chinese culture and to address his Western readers in a familiar and non-alienating idiom.

I. Early Translations of Montaigne: Liang Zongdai

The first to translate and seriously promote Montaigne's essays in China was Liang Zongdai (梁宗岱), who in July 1933 published an article entitled "Commemorating the Four Hundredth Anniversary of the Birth of Montaigne" (蒙田四百周年生辰紀念) in the Shanghai periodical *Literature* (文學). The article, which briefly summarizes the facts of Montaigne's life, was followed by a modern Chinese (baihua/白話) translation of the essay "*Que philosopher c'est apprendre à mourir*/To Philosophize is to Learn How to Die" (1:20). After this initial introduction of Montaigne into China, Liang continued to translate, and in 1936 contributed twenty-one translations of Montaigne's essays to *Zheng Zhenduo's Anthology of World Literature* (鄭振鐸世界文庫), a multi-volume project with the ambitious cosmopolitan mission of making masterworks of world literature accessible to Chinese readers.⁴ In these volumes, Liang's translations of Montaigne's essays stand flanked by Chinese translations of excerpted works by Nietzsche, Charlotte Brontë, and Cervantes, among others. In the following years, from 1938 to 1943, Liang and a handful of others including Chen Zhanyuan (陳占元) and Bo Fu (伯符) continued to translate Montaigne's essays and publish them in periodicals such as the Hong Kong *Star Island Daily* (星島日報) and *Cultural Vanguard* (文化先鋒)⁵.

Yet despite the appearance of these scattered and partial translations, Montaigne's essays did not receive the enthusiastic welcome in China that one might expect given the wild popularity of short essayistic prose in 1930s China.⁶ The modern scholar Qian Linsen cites two reasons for this relatively luke-warm response to Montaigne: first, because many Chinese intellectuals, even those who had studied abroad, lacked fluency in Western languages other than English, they were unable to read Montaigne in the original French. And second, during this period, modern Chinese authors tended to seek out and embrace the new in all its forms rather than to revive the old. (錢林森, 1995, 頁 35).

While these reasons carry a certain amount of truth, each requires further elaboration. Qian's first reason does not fully explain the indifferent response to Liang Zongdai's translations, for even if most modern Chinese authors were unable to read Montaigne in the original French, they could still have soaked up the influence of his writings via Liang's newly available translations. Witness, for instance, the flood of modern Chinese literature in response to and in imitation of Ibsen's *A Doll's House* following this work's translation into Chinese.⁷ Modern Chinese authors were certainly no more conversant in Norwegian than they

were in French! From this example we see that while modern Chinese authors' unfamiliarity with the French language may have hindered their ability to appreciate the original texts, it cannot account for their seeming lack of interest in Montaigne.

To better understand modern Chinese authors' coolness toward what should have been an author of great import to them we must consider which specific essays Liang chose to translate. Without exception, Liang's translations included in the *Anthology of World Literature* derive from Book One of Montaigne's *Essays*. These works, composed between 1571 and 1580, embody the earliest phase of Montaigne's intellectual development. Indeed, the *Essays* began as little more than entries in a commonplace book, a record of quotations from the authors Montaigne was reading. Montaigne intersperses a few personal comments and reflections, but these essays are, by and large, the driest, most serious, and least intimate in Montaigne's *oeuvre*. In subsequent years, Montaigne would expand his book by more than half, inserting increasingly personal thoughts into the initial versions of these essays and adding entirely new essays.⁸ His judgment would mature, and he would come to speak increasingly in his own voice, relying less and less on the authority of the ancients. By opting to translate only the early essays, therefore, Liang Zongdai failed to capture the intimate style for which Montaigne would become most famous in the West. Instead, he portrayed an image of Montaigne as a relatively stodgy and unoriginal collector of quotations from antiquity.

In seeking Montaigne's influence in modern China, Qian builds upon an opinion Yu Dafu (郁達夫) expressed in 1935, and concludes that modern Chinese authors, seeking inspiration from the West, turned chiefly toward the English tradition, to authors such as Bacon, Lamb, and Edison who were, in turn, inspired by Montaigne.⁹ Thus Montaigne's influence trickled into China only indirectly, largely through the mediation of the English essay. Indeed, despite Liang Zongdai's translations of Montaigne, it was the English essay, not the French, which most directly influenced the development of modern Chinese prose.

But what do we mean when we speak of modern Chinese prose? Shuang Shen has argued that Chinese literature need not be narrowly defined as literature written in Chinese. Her recent study of the Anglophone press in 1920s-1940s Shanghai begins from the premise that Chinese literature may be construed as works written by Chinese people or as works that convey the experience of being Chinese. (Shen, 2009). From this broader perspective we can begin to see

Montaigne's influence on the writings of Lin Yutang. In his first book written in the United States, Lin Yutang marshals a number of Montaignien themes and stylistic devices to produce a work which, although it does not advertize itself as a translation nor does it even mention Montaigne by name, transmits that author's style and conveys key aspects of his thought. Before analyzing the Montaignien aspects of Lin Yutang's *Importance of Living*, I pause to introduce the work in question and explain the conditions under which it was written.

II. Lin Yutang's *Importance of Living*

Lin Yutang's *Importance of Living* is an anthology of personal essays, published by Reynal and Hitchcock in New York in 1937, and edited by Richard Walsh and Walsh's wife, the well-known novelist Pearl Buck. Its stated aim was to introduce Americans to "the mind of the Chinese people." (Lin, 1996, p. 2). In the opening chapters of text as well as frequently throughout its pages, Lin reminds readers that he is "speaking as a Chinese" and "presenting the Chinese point of view." (Lin, 1996, p. 1, 13, 254). He even goes so far as to mouth the culturally essentialist view that to do otherwise would be impossible for him, since "to understand Western life, one would have to look at it as a Westerner born." (Lin, 1996, p. 2).

The decision to accentuate Lin's Chinese identity in his writings for an American audience was deeply influenced by the author's editors.¹⁰ The comments and criticism that Buck and Walsh provided for Lin throughout his career repeatedly urged him to highlight his Chineseness. Similar attitudes may be found in Buck's published writings about Lin. For instance, her introduction to Lin's first book for an American audience, *My Country and My People* (1935), stresses that unlike many of his Chinese contemporaries, who felt ashamed of their national past and rushed to embrace Western habits, Lin demonstrates deep knowledge of and appreciation for his roots in traditional Chinese culture.¹¹

As critics Richard Jean So and Qian Suoqiao have persuasively argued, Buck and Walsh's decision to capitalize on Lin's Chineseness was motivated largely by market concerns, for the editors believed that Lin's greatest potential for financial success in the United States lay in his ability to serve up nuggets of Chinese wisdom and to provide his American reading public with its first authentic glimpse into what was, to most, an exotic and largely unknown culture. (So, "Collaboration," 2010, pp. 40-62). Walsh and Buck's marketing strategy was therefore to package Lin Yutang as "the Chinese philosopher for millions

of middle-class Americans,” to present him as the virtual incarnation of Chinese culture and its prophet to the United States. (Qian, 2011, p. 178).

As far as sales were concerned, Buck and Walsh’s instincts were correct: in December 1937 *The Importance of Living* was chosen as a featured book by the Book of the Month Club and soon topped the best seller list in the United States. Together with *My Country and My People*, which after only two years was already in its thirteenth printing, this essay collection helped launch Lin on a path to American celebrity. He appeared on radio programs, was invited to write articles for the *New York Times*, and hob-nobbed with major public intellectuals including Eugene O’Neill, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Thomas Mann, Robert Frost, and others. (林太乙，1967，頁170-173)。

Yet the editors’ decision to present Lin as the quintessence of Chinese culture was less than entirely accurate. As Shi Jianwei has argued, Lin’s intellectual output prior to the 1930s in many ways conformed with the pro-Western, anti-traditional-Chinese values of the May Fourth Movement. Shi describes Lin’s writings during the 1920s as resembling those of his contemporaries; like them, Lin “used extremely exaggerated language to criticize the weakness of the national character and the deeply rooted failings of the [Chinese] race.”¹²

It could be argued that part of Lin’s willingness in the twenties to echo his contemporaries’ harsh critiques of Chinese culture was motivated by his relative ignorance of his national heritage. Lin sometimes opined that his upbringing made him feel neither fully Western nor fully Chinese. Born in Fujian, the son of a Presbyterian minister, Lin received, by his own estimation, only a “half-baked knowledge of Chinese” literature. (Lin, 1975, p. 31). He attended St. John’s University in Shanghai, a school founded by the Anglican Church, where courses were taught in English and the curriculum consisted primarily of Western studies. Later, he pursued a master’s degree in comparative literature at Harvard, but left after only one year, moving first to France, where he spoke the language only imperfectly, and quickly on to Germany, where he earned a PhD in linguistics at the University of Leipzig. After returning to China in the 1920s, Lin relocated to New York with the help of Walsh and Buck; he resided there – on and off – for approximately the next decade.¹³ This brief biographical sketch illustrates that, having spent large portions of time abroad and having received the bulk of his education in Western schools, Lin may have lacked the solid foundation in the Chinese classics which Buck attributed to him. In fact, his intellectual background consisted of a patchwork of influences both East and West, the traces of which are manifest in his writings. (Lin, 1975, p. 31).

Yet if Lin's diverse background did not enable him to live up to the purely Chinese image Pearl Buck had of him, it certainly did equip him to act as a translator in the fullest sense of the word. In addition to writing essays on the theory of translation, Lin Yutang sponsored and personally undertook numerous translation projects.¹⁴ In fact, when he began writing *The Importance of Living* he conceived of it as an anthology of translations of Ming and Qing *xiaopin* essays culled from such works as *The Travels of Lao Can* (老殘遊記) by Liu E (劉鶚), *Recollections from the Studio in the Shadow of the Plum Tree* (影梅庵憶語) by Mao Xiang (冒襄), and *Autumn Recollections of the Lamp with the Lock* (秋鐙鎖憶) by Jiang Tan (蔣坦). His translations of these works, he hoped, would convey to Americans "the cultural essence of China and the Chinese art of living."¹⁵

To Lin's chagrin, however, his idea of compiling a book of translations met with Walsh's opposition. The editor insisted that Lin's book should express his personal views. According to one biographer, Lin "heartily acquiesced" to Walsh's proposal:¹⁶ he produced a manuscript which, while not entirely devoid of translations, scattered them subtly among much larger passages in which Lin voiced his own opinions. What's more, Lin informed readers in the introduction that he had chosen "to speak as a modern ... *not merely act as a respectful translator of the ancients.*" (Lin Yutang, 1996, p. xiii. Emphasis mine). In these ways, Lin followed Walsh's suggestion, for *The Importance of Living* is not primarily a translation in the ordinary sense of the word: even in passages where Lin claims to be translating from Ming and Qing *xiaopin*, he takes broad liberties in his English renditions, erring always on the side of readability in English over faithfulness to the Chinese originals.

Nonetheless, as suggested earlier, *The Importance of Living* may well be considered a cultural translation, for Lin's mission was to introduce Americans to Chinese "wisdom" and cultural values. As a cultural translator Lin occupied an intermediary role: he had to present himself not only as representative of a *foreign* culture, but also as somehow *similar* to his readers. To succeed, he could not paint himself and China as completely incommensurate with the West, for where total difference reigns, no translation is possible. Instead Lin needed to portray China in terms that were familiar and comprehensible to his American readership. This meant establishing common ground between reader and author/translator, occasionally stepping out of his role as cultural "other" and adopting a Western-style (or faux-Western-style) view toward Chinese culture, regarding (or feigning to regard) China as unusual, exotic, and sometimes even distasteful. These strategies not only enabled Lin to gain readers' trust but also fostered a sense of intimacy and personal connection between reader and

author/translator.¹⁷

Lin was acutely aware of the necessity of cultivating this trust. His memoir, written late in life, recalls: “I [developed] a style, the secret of which is [to] take your reader into confidence, a style you feel like talking [sic] to an old friend in your unbuttoned words. All the books I have written have this characteristic which has a charm of its own. It brings the reader closer to you.” (Lin, 1975, p. 69). Lin knew the effect he was striving for, but how conscious was he of the means by which to achieve it? His statements on this subject link his prose style primarily to native Chinese sources, yet I would argue that his essays bear the traces of a much broader scope of sources and influences. Whether consciously or not, Lin deployed a host of rhetorical and stylistic methods to accommodate his Western readers. For example, using Montaigne’s *Essays* without acknowledging this source allowed Lin to make readers of *The Importance of Living* experience an indefinable sense of familiarity with the text, all the while permitting them to believe Lin’s oft-repeated assertions that he was introducing them to a foreign and exotic culture.

III. How Did Lin Yutang Encounter Montaigne: Several Speculations

Before arguing that *The Importance of Living* functions as a subtle translation of Montaigne, I must attempt to demonstrate that Lin Yutang indeed read Montaigne. Of this there can be no doubt. By at least 1950 references to Montaigne begin to appear in Lin’s English writings. (Lin Yutang, 1950, p. xiv, 29, 235, 241, 243). But textual evidence from within *The Importance of Living* suggests that Lin read Montaigne significantly earlier. Given that by his own avowal Lin spoke scarcely any French, how and under what circumstances did he encounter Montaigne? In answer to these questions, I can at present only offer several speculations.

Although it is possible that Lin Yutang read Liang Zongdai’s translations of Montaigne in Zheng Zhenduo’s anthology, the more likely scenario is that Lin came across Montaigne in English translation during his youth. Translations of Montaigne were readily available in the English-speaking world, the first complete English translation having been completed by John Florio in 1603, and a series of other translations having followed. Moreover, Montaigne’s place in the canon of Western literature was, by the early twentieth century, well established, and Montaigne was a favorite among Western Modernists including Walter Pater

and Virginia Woolf.¹⁸ Yet we cannot know for certain whether Lin encountered Montaigne at school. The curriculum at St. John's University during Lin's years of matriculation has not been preserved, and although at Harvard he enrolled in a course entitled "Literary Criticism in France," Montaigne was not a required text for the class.¹⁹

It is equally likely that Lin may have encountered Montaigne in his prodigious pleasure reading. According to one account, Lin was often bored at school and challenged himself by undertaking (and purportedly completing!) the project of reading all five thousand volumes in the St. John's University library. (林太乙, 1967, 頁 18). He continued to read voraciously throughout graduate school, as the following passage attests. Here Lin disarmingly compares himself to a monkey on the loose in Harvard's Widener library and asserts that some of his best reading was accomplished outside of class. He writes:

I always maintained a university should be a jungle where monkeys should be let loose to pick and choose from a feast of nuts from any tree he wants and swing and jump to other branches. His monkey sense will tell him what nut is good and eatable [sic]. I was having a riot of a banquet. To me Widener Library was Harvard and Harvard was Widener Library. (Lin, 1975, p. 40).

Was Montaigne one course in that sumptuous banquet? The historical evidence alone does not point to a conclusive answer, yet it seems likely that Lin Yutang would have encountered Montaigne during his studies of or sojourn in the West. The strongest evidence that Lin Yutang read Montaigne, however, comes from within the text itself.

III. Montaigne and Lin Yutang: Cultural Translators, Cultural Critics

Lin Yutang's essays resonate with those of Montaigne in both aims and rhetorical strategies. Both authors embark on bold missions of cultural translation and criticism of the West. They not only introduce their readers to a foreign culture, but simultaneously effect subtle but penetrating critiques of the implied readers' most fundamental and deeply held (though often unexamined) beliefs.²⁰ For Montaigne, this translation and critique takes place most famously in his essay on the newly-discovered cannibal tribes of South America. His essay acquaints the reader with a foreign culture which the reader is presumably

inclined to view as primitive, violent, and abhorrent. Yet by manipulating perspective in unexpected ways, Montaigne presents a surprisingly even-handed picture of the cannibals and encourages the reader to tolerate if not even identify with representatives of this foreign culture. In so doing, the essay defamiliarizes the reader's experience of his home culture and stimulates him to reconsider his formerly unexamined assumptions of Western cultural superiority.

Several of Lin Yutang's essays in *The Importance of Living* deploy similar strategies: under the guise of introducing a foreign culture, they disturb the reader's Western prejudices. Yet the foreign peoples Lin presents are, for the most part, not the wild, unruly cannibals of Brazil; rather, they are the Chinese.²¹ Americans in the 1930s surely did not view the Chinese with such repugnance and fear as sixteenth century Frenchmen regarded cannibals, but to many Americans China remained largely unknown and associated with uncivilized practices. In representing China, Lin Yutang sought to depict this nation in ways that would break down ingrained stereotypes and promote cross-cultural understanding. Thus although Montaigne wrote from the perspective of a cultural insider, an educated French nobleman speaking to other Frenchman, while Lin Yutang wrote from the perspective of a cultural outsider, a Chinese immigrant writing in a foreign language and attempting to make his largely undervalued cultural background accessible to Americans, both authors undertook similar projects: they strove not only to promote understanding of another culture, but in the process to overturn (or at least interrogate) some of the Western reader's cultural assumptions.

The argument is rarely made that Lin Yutang's essays contain incisive cultural critique of the West. Certainly most of Lin's Chinese contemporaries viewed his essays and the *xiaopin* genre in which he wrote as light and diversionary, devoid of any serious political or social content.²² Indeed, Lin's essays of the 1930s have often been contrasted with those of his peers, whose prose more directly addressed the social issues of the day. Next to theirs, Lin's essays, focusing on leisure activities such as the enjoyment of tea and flowers, do indeed seem trivial. However, I would argue, along with Richard Jean So, that beneath this frothy veneer lie substantive critiques, if not of China, then certainly of the West. (So, *Coolie Democracy*, 2010, p. 174).

In the early stages of writing *The Importance of Living*, Lin undoubtedly considered the book a critique of the West. In an essay entitled "How I Wrote *My Country and My People* and *The Importance of Living*" (關於吾國與吾民及生活的藝術之寫作) he records how, after having composed over two hundred pages, he consigned the entire manuscript to flames. The rationale he provides is that

“the whole framework was based on an overall criticism of modern Western materialist culture, and the criticism became deeper and deeper and the style became more and more argumentative.”²³ This quotation evinces that in the initial phase of writing, Lin consciously intended to criticize Western culture, but that he also had certain reservations about the viability of doing so. In the analysis that follows, I show that the final version of Lin’s book balances these counterpoised ambitions: Lin ultimately adopts several rhetorical strategies (such as the cultivation of an intimate, conversational tone) to soften his initially more argumentative style, but he never extirpates the underlying critique of the West. Indeed, Lin’s criticisms of Western culture become all the more compelling because they are couched in deceptively appealing and seemingly familiar rhetoric, rhetoric with long roots in the Montaignien tradition.

Before examining Lin Yutang’s critiques of the West, however, I analyze Montaigne’s essay on the cannibals, and give special attention to the rhetorical means by which this essay makes readers reconsider their Western cultural assumptions.²⁴ This discussion paves the way for the following section, which addresses Lin’s adoption of similar techniques, which also critique the West, this time through the lens of the Chinese cultural Other.

IV. Cultural Critique & Cultural Translation: Montaigne’s Cannibals

Montaigne’s essay on the cannibals addresses an implied reader who ignorantly believes that he can clearly distinguish between civilization and barbarity. Before even mentioning the cannibals of South America, Montaigne opens the essay with an allusion to two ancient cultures widely considered to be the twin fountainheads of Western civilization, Greece and Rome. The essay begins:

When King Pyrrhus crossed into Italy, after noting the excellent formation of the army which the Romans had sent ahead towards him he said ‘I do not know what kind of Barbarians these are’ (for Greeks called all foreigners Barbarians) ‘but I see nothing barbarous about the ordering of the army which I can see.’²⁵

This opening gambit surprises on a number of levels: to Renaissance readers, the first jolt occurs when Montaigne implies that from the Greek perspective, Romans were barbarians. This belief, uncommon among Montaigne’s contemporaries, jars with readers’ habitual view, for they typically held Rome in

great esteem. It thus marks Montaigne's first attempt (essay) to enjoin readers to consider the relativity of categories such as "barbarity" and "civilization."

If the opening line pushes the reader out of his comfort zone, the essay soon returns him to a more stable spot, for Montaigne seems to endorse the mainstream humanist view that Greece and Rome were both great civilizations. He singles out King Pyrrhus as an exceptionally perspicacious Greek who, unlike his contemporaries, recognized the value of Roman culture, exemplified in the orderliness of the Roman army. Pyrrhus' perspective thus corresponds to that of the implied (humanist) reader. But not entirely, for although Pyrrhus' respect for Rome coincides with the humanist view, the contexts in which these views evolve differ.

Pyrrhus, the essay posits, was a dissenter. Unlike the implied reader, whose positive estimation of Roman civilization represents the majority view in his era, Pyrrhus questioned and ultimately rejected his contemporaries' appraisal of Romans as barbarians. Montaigne strongly approves of Pyrrhus' independent judgment. Montaigne admonishes, "we should be ... wary of accepting common opinions; we should judge them by the ways of reason not by popular vote."²⁶

Montaigne has maneuvered his reader into an awkward position: he has endorsed the Renaissance humanist opinion that Rome does not deserve to be called barbarous, yet he has simultaneously attacked the implied reader's *grounds* for espousing these beliefs, and encouraged him to consider such questions *for himself* rather than hastily to assent to popular opinion. Indeed, Montaigne avers, "There is nothing savage or barbarous about [anyone], but that every man calls barbarous anything he is not accustomed to; it is indeed the case that we have no other criterion of truth or right-reason than the example and form of the opinions and customs of our own country."²⁷ The question of whom to consider barbarous and whom civilized is thus thrown wide open. And this question leads to many others regarding personal and cultural identity.

In fact, Montaigne's discussion of Greece and Rome is merely an appetizer to the meat of the essay, an investigation into the cannibals of Brazil. Like his treatment of the Greeks and Romans, Montaigne's appraisal of the cannibals shuttles back and forth among conflicting points of view. He fleetingly assents that "we [Europeans] can indeed call those folk [the cannibals] barbarians by the rules of reason," yet he quickly adds "but not in comparison to ourselves, who surpass them in every kind of barbarism."²⁸ In illustration of this point, after having described in detail the manner in which the cannibals feed and entertain

their captives, providing them with material comforts, then hack them to bits and subsequently roast them before feeding upon their flesh, Montaigne remarks “it does not sadden me that we should note the terrible barbarity in a practice such as theirs: what does sadden me [however] is that, while judging correctly of their wrong-doings we should be so blind to our own.” He elaborates:

I think there is more barbarity in eating a man alive than in eating him dead; more barbarity in lacerating by rack and torture a body still fully able to feel things, in roasting him alive little by little and having him bruised and bitten by pigs and dogs (as we have not only read about but seen in recent memory, not among enemies in antiquity but among our fellow-citizens and neighbours — and, what is worse, in the name of duty and religion) than in eating him after his death.²⁹

In these passages, Montaigne makes a show of perpetuating European stereotypes about cannibals: he affirms that they are indeed brutal, barbaric, etc. Yet at the same time, he leverages his discussion of the cannibals to effect a serious critique of his home culture. The cannibals allow Montaigne to reveal the cruelty unleashed by the Wars of Religion between Protestants and Catholics in mid-sixteenth century France, and thus enable Montaigne to begin unsettling Europeans' smug assumptions of cultural superiority. In short, from Montaigne's perspective, the cannibals may be barbaric, but Europeans are even more so.

If the passages cited above remain mired in the prevalent cultural assumption that the cannibals are violent and savage, other passages take a different tack and portray the natives in a considerably more positive light as honest and brave. Whereas the excerpts above depicted the vices of cannibal society as milder versions of the full-blown atrocities perpetrated in the West, here, in a striking passage consisting of fifteen consecutive negative phrases, Montaigne portrays cannibal society as the polar *opposite* of European society: a pristine state untrammelled by the chaos and licentiousness plaguing Europe. Yet here as elsewhere, Montaigne's focus remains on the cannibals as a foil for European society. Montaigne writes that the cannibals

have no trade of any kind, no acquaintance with writing, no knowledge of numbers, no terms for governor or political superior, no practice of subordination or of riches or poverty, no contracts, no inheritances, no divided estates, no occupation but leisure, no concern for kinship — except such as is common to them all — no clothing, no agriculture, no metals, no

use of wine or corn. Among them you hear no words for treachery, lying, cheating, avarice, envy, backbiting or forgiveness.³⁰

Here Montaigne depicts the cannibals as a reverse image of Europe, a culture defined by lack – yet this very lack carries a positive valence: it is the absence of vice.

Montaigne picks up on this theme elsewhere in the *Essays*; he expresses admiration for the cannibals' honesty, forthrightness, and valor, and on several occasions compares himself with them – as when, for instance, he asserts that in his essays he speaks his mind plainly, and boldly declares that he would gladly reveal himself “completely naked.”³¹ These examples testify that the cannibals represent some of Montaigne's most dearly cherished values. Yet “On the Cannibals” ends abruptly with a strong statement of European chauvinism: “Not at all bad, that,” Montaigne declares, having praised the cannibals for their sophisticated poetry, “Ah! But they wear no breeches...”³² This notoriously enigmatic ending raises many questions: Does it hint that despite Montaigne's implication throughout the essay that the cannibals and the implied European reader share a common and inalienable humanity, he nevertheless still harbors some European bias against this cultural Other? Or does the final line represent the perspective of a prospective reader, unconvinced by Montaigne's arguments in favor of cultural relativism? Like the ancient skeptics, whose philosophy he so admired, Montaigne suspends judgment. And so must readers. But regardless of how and whether readers judge the cannibals, the fact remains that Montaigne's essay has introduced a foreign culture which the implied reader was initially inclined to view with loathing, detailed its customs in a surprisingly empathetic manner, and through these means effected a critique on the West. In so doing, it has stimulated the reader to reconsider his naive assumptions of cultural superiority.

V. China: The Cannibals of the East

Throughout *The Importance of Living*, Lin Yutang deploys the image of China much as Montaigne leverages that of the cannibals, both to conduct a critique of Western culture and simultaneously to humanize a foreign culture which the implied reader might be inclined to regard with suspicion or dislike. Just as Montaigne represented the cannibals from a number of perspectives so as to make readers reconsider their unexamined prejudices of what constitutes barbarity, so does Lin paradoxically present China in a startling array of mutually conflicting guises. At times he portrays China as analogous to the West and

points to the two civilizations' common humanity. But at other times he depicts China as the opposite of the West, a country that, while perhaps backwards technologically, possesses old-world charm, a leisurely lifestyle, and timeless wisdom from which harried Europeans might stand to benefit. As in the case of Montaigne's essay on the cannibals, the coexistence of these clashing viewpoints spurs readers to question whatever assumptions of cultural supremacy they may at first have had.

More explicitly than Montaigne ever does with his cannibals, Lin Yutang stresses the shared humanity between his American readers and the Other culture about which he writes. Juxtaposing quotations by Walt Whitman with translations of commentaries by the Ming dynasty literatus Jin Shengtan (金聖嘆), Lin places the two cultures on an even footing and begins to chip away at cultural hierarchies so as to "show the identity of our [Eastern and Western] senses." (Lin, 1996, p. 128). In addition to employing such rhetorical strategies, Lin repeatedly states his beliefs discursively: he avers that beneath traditions as different as the ancient Greek, the Christian, and the "Taoist-Confucian" lie common and fundamentally human concerns. He writes, "Deep ... down in their allegorical sense, these [various] views after all do not differ so much from one another." (Lin, 1996, p. 15). Indeed, in the introduction to the book, Lin states "we are all alike under the skin, what touches the human heart in one country touches all." (Lin, 1996, p. 1). This idea is repeated almost verbatim in an essay entitled "On Having a Stomach," where Lin remarks, "I cannot but believe human nature is very much the same and we are all so much alike under the skin." (Lin, 1996, p. 44). These comments evince Lin's sincere desire to present China and the West as commensurate cultures and to level out hierarchies that would privilege one over the other.

Yet like Montaigne, Lin often plays with what the critic Wayne Booth calls "unstable irony." (Booth, 1974). In fact, when we consider the immediate context of Lin's remarks in "On Having a Stomach," their meaning becomes significantly more difficult to decipher. After having self-critically described the way in which "In China, we bribe our way into the good will of everybody by frequent dinners," and having intimated that there is a statistical correlation between the number of dinners a man hosts and the speed with which he is promoted in China, Lin asks rhetorically:

But, constituted as we all are, how can we react otherwise? I do not think this [habit of bribing people with food] is particularly Chinese. How can an American postmaster-general or chief of department decline a private

request for a personal favor from some friend at whose home he has eaten five or six good meals? I bet on the Americans being as human as the Chinese. The only difference is the Americans haven't got insight into human nature or haven't proceeded logically to organize their political life in accordance with it. I guess there is something similar to this Chinese way of life in the American political world too, since I cannot but believe human nature is very much the same and we are all so much alike under the skin... (Lin, 1996, p. 44).

In this passage Lin seems to stress the commonalities between China and the West – in this case the tendency toward corruption. Like Montaigne, he begins by introducing this vice as typical of a foreign culture (here the Chinese) and only gradually insinuates that it also characterizes the West. This subtle shift is evident in the broadening scope of reference of the word “we”: in the sentence that begins “In China, we bribe...”, the pronoun “we” plainly refers only to Chinese people. Yet later, in the phrase “constituted as we all are,” the presence of the word “all” renders the referent of “we” unclear: it could refer to American readers and Chinese subjects alike, or only to all Chinese. By the end of the excerpt, in the sentence, “I cannot but believe human nature is very much the same and we are all so much alike under the skin,” the referent of “we” has opened out unambiguously to include the reader. By using this pronoun in a shifting and unstable manner and by refusing to adhere strictly to an “us/them” dichotomy in his analysis of Chinese and Western customs, Lin highlights the commonalities between these two equally “human” cultures.

Yet by using the rhetorical trick of associating bribery, which carries a negative connotation, with human nature, which carries a positive connotation, Lin Yutang simultaneously praises China for the very same traits for which he implicitly faults the West. The sentence “I bet on the Americans being *as human as the Chinese*” feigns to accentuate cultural similarity – Chinese and Americans are portrayed as equally human. But what follows reinforces discourses of cultural difference: “Americans *haven't got* insight into human nature or *haven't proceeded logically* to organize their political life in accordance with it.” In these comparisons China always comes out on top: the West's achievements in humanity, logic, and insight are all measured against China's superior accomplishments – a reversal of the more typical, Western-centered standard in this period. It could be argued, then, that although Lin may seem at first to advocate cultural equality in this passage, he actually (though subtly) manifests chauvinistic Sinocentrism.

But can this display of Chinese cultural supremacy be taken straight, or is it laced with irony? We must recall that the very cultural traits of which Lin seems so proud are nothing but code for graft. And after all, China, he insists, does not surpass America in this vice, only in its *awareness* of its ubiquity. Lin's statements on this issue recall Montaigne's assertion that "we [Europeans] can indeed call [the cannibals] barbarians by the rules of reason, but not in comparison to ourselves, who surpass them in every kind of barbarism."³³ Similarly, Lin's observation that Americans lack insight into "human nature" (a.k.a corruption at home) echoes Montaigne's remark that he is troubled by Europeans' blindness to their own failings and by the swiftness with which they accuse other peoples of barbarity. Thus, as in Montaigne's essay on the cannibals, Lin's advertized emphasis on shared humanity across cultures functions less to elevate readers' estimation of the foreign culture (be it cannibal or Chinese) than it does to indict the West.

If the previous examples indicated Lin's inclination at least to give lip service to the commonalities between China and the West, the following ones illustrate his countervailing tendency to depict China as the West's polar opposite. And just as Montaigne observes in cannibal society a certain purity and guilelessness which he suggests decadent Europeans would do well to emulate, so too does Lin portray Chinese society as providing, by its purported simplicity, lessons salubrious for curing the ills of contemporary Western society. In the passage below, Lin's language – with its lengthy succession of negative clauses – is strongly reminiscent of Montaigne's in the excerpt (cited above) which represents cannibal society as the reverse image of Europe. Lin writes:

[China is] a land where no one is trying very hard to think and everyone is trying very hard to live[;...] a land where philosophy itself is a pretty simple and common sense affair that can be as conveniently put in two lines of verse as in a heavy volume[;...] a land where there is no system of philosophy, broadly speaking, no logic, no metaphysics, no academic jargon; where there is much less academic dogmatism, less intellectual or practical fanaticism, and fewer abstract terms and long words. No sort of mechanistic rationalism is ever possible and there is a strong hatred of the idea of logical necessity. It becomes also a land where there are no lawyers in business life, as there are no logicians in philosophy. In place of well thought out systems of philosophy, they have only an intimate feeling of life, and instead of a Kant or a Hegel, they have only essayists, epigram writers and propounders of Buddhist conundrums and Taoist parables." (Lin, 1996, p. 414).

Despite the repeated use of negations, the image of China this passage conjures is distinctly positive, indeed almost ideal. As in the similar Montaigne excerpt, the “foreign” culture is portrayed as lacking vices rampant in the contemporary West. Yet both authors refrain from stating their critique outright. Instead, they leave it implicit, allowing readers to come to it themselves. By withholding this final step in their arguments, Montaigne and Lin Yutang’s prose gains both subtlety and power. The subtlety comes from the fact that in these passages the authors do not overtly reveal their own points of view, and the power derives from the fact that, having discovered the implicit critique of the West *for themselves* – rather than having been told – readers find it all the more persuasive.

Yet lest these subtle insinuations of cultural difference be lost on more obtuse readers, Lin provides other passages which proffer more direct criticisms of Europe. One such instance occurs in his humorously-titled essay “Some Curious Western Habits.” Here Lin repeatedly characterizes the Western custom of shaking hands as “barbaric” and contrasts it with the putatively more hygienic Chinese practice of shaking one’s own hands. (Lin, 1996, p. 254). Likewise, in his essay on “The Inhumanity of Western Dress” Lin mocks Western vests and collars, calling them “grotesque,” and stating that they constrict the body so that it can scarcely move. He pointedly and explicitly contrasts Western garb with traditional Chinese attire, which he calls “the only ‘human’ dress in the world” because it allows for free movement of the body. (Lin, 1996, p. 257). And, adopting a Western discourse of progress, he condescendingly suggests that perhaps some day Western dress will “evolve” to become more Chinese. Then and only then will “all cumbersome belts and braces ... be eliminated ... and ease and comfort ... prevail.” (Lin, 1996, p. 261).

Lin’s repeated emphasis on cultural difference combined with his frequent reminders of his own ethnic background – expressed in phrases such as “to an Oriental” and “speaking as a Chinese” (Lin, 1996, p. 178, 13) – may seem to compromise his project of cultural translation, weakening it by raising the specter of an insuperable gulf separating China from the West. But the emphasis on difference also *enables* cultural translation, for only when two cultures are perceived as exhibiting difference are the services of a translator required. Likewise, Lin’s assertions of cultural similarity between China and the West – statements such as “we are all alike under the skin” – both threaten *and facilitate* the mission of cultural translation. The threat arises from the recognition that in situations of similarity or identity no translation or mediation is needed. Yet even where differences abound, some baseline affinity between the two cultures

must be preserved so as to render the translation comprehensible to its audience and establish the credibility of the translator. Like Montaigne, Lin's frequent shifts of perspective allow him to moderate between poles of cultural difference and similarity.

VI. Establishing Trust

We may now interrogate how Lin Yutang achieves a balance of similarity and difference, how he manages to attract and sustain the fascination of his American readers, eager to make contact with an exotic culture, while at the same time not alienating them by the very foreignness or inaccessibility of what they encounter in his text. In what follows, I outline several strategies Lin used for attaining these ends, and then remark upon the ways in which they connect him to the Montaignien tradition.

One strategy Lin uses for establishing a bond between himself and his American readers is to imitate a Western perspective and feign to view China as an alien culture. This shift in perspective is evident, once again, in Lin's inconsistent use of pronouns. We have already observed how Lin used the pronoun "we" to refer first to Chinese only, and then to a wider circle including both American readers and Chinese subjects. In other passages Lin refers to the Chinese as "they" and in doing so distances himself from the Chinese perspective and aligns himself with the reader's point of view. For instance, in his essay on having a stomach, Lin asserts that "the Chinese are different [from Westerners]. *They* have bad table manners..." (Lin, 1996, p. 46. Emphasis mine). Lines like this, which seem to underscore Western stereotypes about Chinese and promote both cultural essentialism and cultural chauvanism, recur frequently throughout the text. In several passages Lin's vocabulary implicitly compares Chinese people to scientific specimens: having introduced his ambition to "present ... *the* Chinese point of view,"³⁴ Lin commences the second chapter with the words "Let *us* begin with an *examination of the Chinese mental make-up...*" (Lin, 1996, p. 4. Emphasis mine). Or again, having paved the way for a passage he intends to translate from the Chinese, Lin remarks "*We* are now ... prepared to *examine* and appreciate the happy moments of a Chinese as *he* describes them." (Lin, 1996, p. 129. Emphasis mine). The repeated use of third person pronouns to describe Chinese people, combined with verbs such as "examine," distances Lin's authorial voice from the perspective of the Chinese and places him instead in the reader's camp. At times Lin even adopts a patronizing tone toward the Chinese, as when, for instance, he writes concerning Chinese medicine, "*We* have to ...

congratulate the Chinese people on *their* happy confusion of medicine and food.” (Lin, 1996, p. 248. Emphasis mine). These strategies all promote identification between implied reader and authorial persona; they create a common ground or shared ideological space in which Lin presents himself to the reader as a cultural insider (“one of us”) rather than as a representative of a foreign people.

Another effective strategy Lin Yutang uses to draw the reader in and inspire his trust is to cultivate an informal, conversational tone. Composed orally in chatty, vernacular American English, Lin’s essays call attention to the plainness and simplicity of their diction. Lin touts the “natural”-ness of his “matter-of-fact prose,” and implies that his transparent and easy-to-grasp style corresponds to the sincerity of his opinions. As if in testimony to this authenticity, his essays meander digressively, scattering personal reflections, opinions, memories, and anecdotes among more serious observations and cultural critiques. Furthermore, they are seasoned with generous doses of self-deprecating humor, and address such disarmingly mundane topics as “Lying in Bed,” “Being Wayward and Incalculable,” and “The Art of Reading.” Lin oxymoronically describes these activities as “the significant trivialities of our daily life,” for in them he discovers a certain unexpected profundity. He analogizes this mixture of seriousness and playfulness so characteristic of his essayistic style to the natural twists and turns of a conversation among friends. (Lin, 1996, p. v).³⁵

In his essay “On Conversation,” whose title evokes Montaigne’s “On the Art of Conversation (De l’art de conferer), Lin writes, “As a rule, a good conversation is always like a good familiar essay.” (Lin, 1996, p. 211). And explains: “both [the] style ... [and the] contents [of a good conversation] are similar to [those] of the essay ... The point [they have] most in common ... is [their] leisurely style.”³⁶ In his more theoretical writings on the essay genre, written in Chinese, Lin frequently repeats this comparison of the essay genre to a conversation. “I like the essay [*xiaopin*] form best,” he opines, “because as you read along, you have the sensation of talking with a dear friend, exchanging ideas with him in good faith, and you can easily perceive his innermost feelings ...”³⁷ We have already encountered Lin’s testimony that he strove to adopt an “unbuttoned” style that would bring readers into his confidence. (Lin, 1996, p. 394).³⁸ He further explains that establishing this kind of trust between reader and authorial persona enables an author to “awaken readers to wisdom [and] incite them to think deeply.” He continues: “In a single phrase [the author] can lay bare [the reader’s preconceptions] and lead him to sudden enlightenment.”³⁹ Lin’s choice to adopt this disarmingly direct style in a book whose covert mission was to critique American society should thus be construed as strategic. For

his conversational tone lowers readers' defenses and places them in a frame of mind that allows them to recognize the foibles and failings of their own society.

Interestingly, virtually all of the strategies Lin deploys to create this sense of ease and trust between reader and authorial persona appear in Montaigne's *Essays*. Like *The Importance of Living*, Montaigne's prose meanders and digresses, touching upon a wide range of subjects including some as seemingly trivial as "smells," "the custom of wearing clothes," and "how we weep and laugh at the same thing."⁴⁰ Composed in regionally inflected vernacular French, Montaigne's essays are interlarded with personal details such as the author's recollections of his painful kidney stones and discussions of his predilection for pacing back and forth when engrossed in thought. Montaigne, who claims to "want to be seen in [his] simple, natural, and everyday fashion,"⁴¹ boasts that his writing style is "coarse" and formless.⁴² These comments recall Lin Yutang's assertion that his prose is "natural" and "matter-of-fact" and bolster the impression that both authors are speaking in good earnest.

Endeavoring to establish his credibility from the outset, Montaigne begins the preface to the *Essays* with the line: "You have here, Reader, a book whose faith can be trusted."⁴³ Compare this to the opening line of Lin's *Importance of Living*: "This is a personal testimony, a testimony of my own experience of thought and life. It is not intended to be objective." (Lin, 1996, p. v). Both opening sentences make a strong claim for the authenticity of all that follows. Indeed, throughout both books the authors repeat their bids for sincerity by verbally insisting on the truth of what they say – Montaigne avows that he "can talk only in earnest."⁴⁴ – revealing intimate details of their lives, and strategically presenting themselves now and then in self-effacing postures. These techniques combine to inspire trust, place the reader in the author's confidence, and lay the groundwork for the congenial conversation that will ensue.

Although unlike Lin Yutang, Montaigne never explicitly states the connection between friendly conversation and the essay form, these two modes of communication are intimately linked in Montaigne's essayistic practice. When composing the *Essays*, Montaigne famously "tested out" (*essayeur*) different opinions, weighing them against one another and incorporating quotations from authors ancient and contemporary, each supporting a different viewpoint.⁴⁵ Yet rarely did he attempt to reconcile the divergent perspectives they represented. Thus Montaigne's prose abounds in contradictions and exhibits what Bakhtin calls *polyphony*; it displays a plurality of opinions or voices which seem to debate a subject from many angles.

Montaigne's essays have also been interpreted as recording conversations he engaged in with himself: for after each new edition of the *Essays* appeared in print (in 1580 and 1588), Montaigne would return to the text with fresh eyes and re-edit it. These re-perusals frequently prompted Montaigne to pursue a tangent that had eluded him earlier or to look beyond his initial opinions and consider counter-arguments to those he had previously advanced. Describing his process of writing, Montaigne proclaims, "I adjust, but I do not correct."⁴⁶ His additions, called *allongements*, introduce nuance, contradiction, and many alluring digressions into the text.⁴⁷ He defends these discontinuities on the grounds that they enhance the pleasure of reading; they stimulate the reader not only to puzzle over the connections among the author's incongruous opinions, but also to embark on cogitative meanderings of his or her own. Thus Montaigne's text places ancient and contemporary authors in conversation with one another, Montaigne in dialogue with himself, and readers in discussion with Montaigne.

VII. Establishing an Intellectual Lineage

Despite these many levels of conversationality in Montaigne's essays, their resonances with the conversationality in Lin Yutang's essays, and the heavy discursive emphasis Lin places on the commonalities between these two modes of communication, never in *The Importance of Living* or in his major theoretical writings on the essay form does Lin mention Montaigne. In fact, Lin invokes a completely different literary lineage to explain the origins of his disarming style. According to Lin, his style grows out of a long and – significantly – indigenous Chinese tradition associated with the Gong'an (公安) and Jingling (竟陵) schools and stemming from the late Ming and early Qing dynasties. This style, known as the *xiaopin*, was characterized by the aesthetic values of *qu* (趣), taste or fascination with connoisseurship of the seemingly insignificant details of life, and by *zhen* (真), truthfulness, or unrestrained expression of one's genuine emotions.⁴⁸ Among its most famous practitioners were the three Yuan brothers – Yuan Hongdao (袁宏道), Yuan Zhongdao (袁中道), and Yuan Zongdao (袁宗道) – Zhang Chao (張潮), Tu Long (屠隆), Li Liweng (李笠翁), Li Zhuowu (李卓吾), and Jin Shengtan (金聖嘆), all of whom are frequently mentioned and several of whose works are excerpted and translated in the pages of *The Importance of Living*. Lin further reinforces his connection with these authors by borrowing from Yuan Zongdao the title for one of his most well-known theoretical essays on the essay form. Without a doubt, Lin's conversational style bears many similarities to the expressivist aesthetics of the Gong'an and Jingling schools.⁴⁹

Yet in tracing his essayistic style to roots in this tradition, Lin Yutang was merely repeating – or at best elaborating upon – what was becoming a standard narrative of the intellectual history of the modern Chinese familiar essay. In 1932 an important collection of late Ming and early Qing essays which had gone largely neglected for centuries was published under the title of *Transcriptions of Modern Chinese Essays* (近代散文抄). Prominently featured in this collection were works by the Yuan brothers, Li Liweng, and many other authors who would come to be Lin Yutang's favorites. In prefaces and postfaces to this anthology, Zhou Zuoren (周作人) and the volume's editor, Shen Qiwu (沈啓無), defended the book's publication on the grounds that the essays contained therein constituted the origins of the modern Chinese essay. Shen plainly writes, "We can pretty much say that contemporary essays are a rebirth of the Gong'an school."⁵⁰

Yet although Lin Yutang claims that his familiar essays stem from the late Ming and early Qing *xiaopin*, Qian Suoqiao has shown that Lin's cultivation of a conversational prose style actually *predates* his awareness of the Gong'an and Jingling schools: Lin began advocating his characteristically "unbuttoned" style under the influence of the American literary scholar and Columbia University professor Joel Spingarn, and only later did he encounter Ming-Qing aesthetics of expressiveness. Lin's delight in reading *Transcriptions of Modern Chinese Essays* and discovering the Gong'an and Jingling schools, Qian tells us, was occasioned by his recognition that their literary theories articulated what he already felt. (Qian, 2011, p. 134).⁵¹ For these reasons, we should consider the correspondence between Lin's essayistic style and that of the Gong'an and Jingling schools as a fortuitous confluence of circumstances. Lin was not merely returning to native influences, he was forging a literary identity out of a rediscovered and composite past. Indeed, there is no reason to believe that simply because Lin more frequently cites these late imperial Chinese authors they exerted a stronger or more formative influence on him than did Western authors such as Montaigne.

One might even be tempted to argue that the absence of explicit reference to Montaigne further embeds Lin in the Montaignien tradition. For in his essays Montaigne notoriously appropriates thoughts and opinions from authors ancient and modern, and incorporates them into his writings unacknowledged. He even boasts,

In the case of those reasonings and original ideas which I transplant into my own soil and confound with my own, I sometimes deliberately omit to give the author's name so as to rein in the temerity of those hasty criticisms

which leap to attack writings of every kind ... I want [readers] to flick Plutarch's nose in mistake for mine and to scald themselves by insulting the Seneca in me.⁵²

Montaigne's habit of quoting or paraphrasing the wisdom of other authors without citing them has led several scholars to analogize Montaigne's use of his sources to cannibalism: just as cannibals ingest the flesh of their captives and incorporate it seamlessly into their own bodies, Montaigne, through his diverse reading, may be seen to nourish himself upon the thoughts and words of his favorite authors. His incorporation of their ideas is at times so complete that, as he avers, even he is "unable to sort out [his] borrowings by [his] knowledge of where they came from" (Montaigne, Screech trans., p. 458).

Although Montaigne often omits the titles of his sources, he generally does provide at least the name of the author whose text he has excised and inserted into his book. Moreover, typographically, the Latin and Greek quotations in the *Essays* are isolated from the body of the text by blank lines before and after each excerpt. Thus, the majority of Montaigne's appropriations from the ancients appear linguistically and typographically raw; they have been only partially digested and remain incompletely integrated into the body of Montaigne's text.

If Montaigne's text represents an early stage of digestion – a time when chunks of undigested source material are still recognizable as such – Lin Yutang's text represents a later stage in the digestive process. To some extent, Lin's incorporation of translated fragments of works by Gong'an and Jingling school authors parallels Montaigne's appropriations from the Greeks and Romans; *The Importance of Living* contains both brief paragraph-length translations from the Chinese and full chapter-length translations. Like Montaigne, Lin more often cites the authors' names than the titles of his sources, but unlike Montaigne, Lin translates. This is significant because in rendering each Chinese passage into English Lin necessarily appropriates and reconfigures his source material to a degree unmatched anywhere in Montaigne.

If Lin Yutang can be said to have digested the Gong'an and Jingling authors he translates, his digestion and assimilation of Montaigne may be considered even more complete. Indeed, Lin seems to have incorporated Montaigne so fully as to have made him an indistinguishable part of himself. Witness the numerous unacknowledged similarities in style and rhetorical strategies between the two. While Lin's non-acknowledgment of these similarities could have resulted from his simply not knowing about Montaigne – as I have

shown, historical evidence does not conclusively prove that by 1937 Lin had read Montaigne – the more likely scenario is that Lin constitutionally resembled Montaigne from the outset or that by the time he began dictating *The Importance of Living* Lin had so fully absorbed Montaigne's influence that he no longer recognized a distinction between himself and this formative influence. Of these two hypotheses, the former begins from the premise of intrinsic similarity, while the latter rests upon the assumption that before Montaigne's influence took hold, the two authors were significantly different. In Lin's writings, however, (as, incidentally, in Montaigne's), discourses of similarity and influence intertwine, and more likely than not, the resonances we perceive between Montaigne and Lin Yutang's prose style resulted from the confluence of both factors.

Like Montaigne, Lin often analogizes eating to reading and asserts that, nourished as he was on earlier sources, he could never be completely original.⁵³ The comparison of intellectual to physical sustenance highlights the composite or derivative nature of his writing. Lin unabashedly declares:

I am not original. The ideas expressed here have been thought and expressed by many thinkers of the East and West over and over again ... They are, nevertheless, my ideas; they have become a part of my being. If they have taken root in my being, it is because they express something original in me, and when I first encountered them, my heart gave an instinctive assent. I like them as ideas and not because the person who expressed them is of account ... If [a] professor of literature knew the sources of my ideas, [he] would be astounded at the Philistine. But there is a greater pleasure in picking up a small pearl in an ash-can than in looking at a large one in a jeweler's window. (Lin, 1996, p. vi).

The language of this paragraph, with its dismissive attitude toward pedants and academicians, echoes that of the Montaigne passage cited above. More importantly, this Lin Yutang excerpt vacillates between discourses of influence (predicated on an initial difference between the author and his sources) and discourses of similarity. The phrases "The ideas expressed here ... have *become* a part of my being" and "they have *taken root*" indicate that Lin Yutang believes himself to have assimilated external influences. But the phrase "they express something *original* in me" gestures towards intrinsic similarities between the Lin and his source material. If Lin echoes the thoughts of earlier authors, he implies here, it is mainly because they allow him to express *himself* more artfully or more precisely. In other words, as Montaigne says, "I only quote others the better to quote myself."⁵⁴

Lin particularly emphasizes this latter point; he observes that as he reads he is occasionally “astounded to discover how another writer [has] said exactly the same things and felt exactly the same way, but perhaps expressed the ideas more easily and more gracefully.” (Lin, 1996, p. vii). Under such circumstances, Lin states, a spiritual affinity develops between author and reader. (Lin, 1996, p. 381-382). Lin dubs “collaborators” the authors with whom he feels such a bond. In the introduction to *The Importance of Living* he states:

I have for my collaborators in writing this book a company of genial souls, who I hope like me as much as I like them. For in a very real sense, these spirits have been with me, in the only form of spiritual communication that I recognize as real – when two men separated by the ages think the same thoughts and sense the same feelings and each perfectly understands the other. In the preparation of this book, a few of my friends have been especially helpful with their contributions and advice:… (Lin, 1996, p. vii).

Significantly, he speaks of “absorbing” the influences of these ancient “friends,” and declares “Some of [them] may happen not to be quoted, but they are here with me in this book all the same.” (Lin, 1996, p. viii).⁵⁵ The intersubjective implications of this statement, its acknowledgement that Lin has blended himself seamlessly with his sources, point to Lin’s work as a reformulation of earlier texts. And this reformulation in turn evokes the notion of “creative transposition,” which Antoine Berman deems the essence of translation. (Berman, 1984, p. 190). In other words, Lin’s incorporation of source material may be construed as a special form of translation, or perhaps as the obverse of translation: whereas the ideas a translator expresses redound ultimately to the credit of the author (not the translator), here Lin Yutang admits to (at times) eliding the names of the authors from whom he borrows and instead appropriating authority for himself.

Despite this fact, Lin does mention by name many of the authors to whom he feels indebted. The sentence cited above continues after the colon:

Po Chüyi [Bai Juyi (白居易)] of the eighth century, Su Tungp’o [Su Dongpo (蘇東坡)] of the eleventh, and that great company of original spirits of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—the romantic and voluble T’u Ch’ihshui [= Tu Long (屠隆)], the playful, original Yüan Chunglang [Yuan Zhonglang = Yuan Hongdao], and the deep, magnificent Li Chuowu [Li Zhuowu = Li Zhi], the sensitive and sophisticated Chang Ch’ao [Zhang Chao], the epicure Li Liweng [= Li Yu], the happy and gay old hedonist

Yüan Tsets'ai [=Yuan Mei (袁枚)], and the bubbling, joking, effervescent Chin Shengt'an [Jin Shengtan]—unconventional souls all ... (Lin, 1996, pp. vii-viii).

Although Western writers and cultural icons appear frequently in the pages of the book – Lin alludes to Shakespeare, Omar Khayyam, Rousseau, Voltaire, Plato, Isaac Newton, Euripides, Hans Christian Andersen, Hitler, Rodin, Marx, Hegel, Jesus, Milton, Swift, Chaucer, Einstein, Edison, Julius Caesar, Lord Balfour, Mussolini, and Joan Crawford, to name just a few – the authors he singles out for recognition as “collaborators” are exclusively Chinese. Montaigne is not listed in their number. This omission is remarkable, given the strong affinities we have observed between the two authors' essayistic styles.

VIII. Conclusion

We have already considered some reasons why Montaigne's name might have been omitted from *The Importance of Living*: first, Lin may have assimilated Montaigne's style so completely that he no longer recognized it as an external influence requiring explicit acknowledgment, and second, Lin and Montaigne may have possessed such similar personalities that their essayistic styles naturally resembled one another. There is also a third possibility, that at the behest of his American editors Lin deliberately suppressed Montaigne's name. The letters that passed between Lin, Walsh, and Buck during the period when Lin was writing *The Importance of Living* have unfortunately not been preserved. However, evidence from their correspondence in the early forties points in this direction. In May 1942 after Lin had submitted the first thirty-five pages of a novel in verse that he was just beginning to compose, Buck replied declaratively:

Three fourths of the book seems to me derivative, that is one can spot here and there and too often what Y.T. has been reading. There are bits that make one think of Poe, ... of Longfellow ... of James Joyce ... A book of this sort would have an eminent value if it came out of Chinese sources. We are all too familiar with the western sources not to recognize them here and to find them stale. But the Chinese sources people do not know. If it could be a Chinese man thinking, out of Chinese wisdom, with Chinese philosophy, it might be fresh and original.⁵⁶

Walsh responded along similar lines:

You [Lin Yutang] are obviously writing under two influences—one, Nietzsche and the other, Whitman. This may be all right for a passage here and there. But I think that you will make a great mistake writing a whole book under any Western influence, either in thought or style. You are a Chinese. Your reputation in this country is built upon your skill in presenting a Chinese point of view in a Chinese manner, even though you write in English. When you write in European or American vein, you are doing the very thing that has made the work of John Wu impossible for publication here, the thing of which other Western-reared Chinese have so often been accused, and which you have successfully avoided hitherto.⁵⁷

Walsh's final remark in this passage demonstrates that he did not find Lin's previous work—presumably including *The Importance of Living*—excessively reliant on or derivative of Western sources. Yet he and Buck had their eyes peeled for correspondences between Lin's writings and those of established writers in the Western canon. Moreover, the Walsh/Buck publishing duo was eager to expunge any such correspondences so as to create for American readers a more purely "oriental" reading experience. This being the case, we can imagine that if they had noticed the affinities between Lin Yutang's and Montaigne's essays when they were reading drafts of *The Importance of Living*, they might well have discouraged the author from mentioning his French predecessor. Clearly Walsh and Buck believed that Lin's success in America rested on his ability to capitalize on his Chineseness, and that overt references to Western authors or excessive reliance on Western styles would hinder him from achieving these ends.

Not mentioning Montaigne in *The Importance of Living* allowed Lin Yutang to solidify the image Walsh and Buck wanted him to present, that of an authentic Chinese person. Doing so permitted him to appear foreign and to persuade readers that his book was offering them rare personal glimpses into an exotic culture. But what Walsh and Buck seem to have missed was that as a cultural translator, Lin could not merely present himself as representative of a *foreign* culture; he also needed to portray himself as somehow *similar* to his readers. Had his book simply translated classical Chinese essays into English, or had it merely relayed Lin's personal rendition of traditional Chinese culture, it could never have garnered the wild success that they sought for Lin in America.

It is here that Lin's silent cannibalization of Montaigne becomes most significant. Although Lin masks his filiation to the Western essayistic tradition

under layers of assertions that his essayistic style grows primarily out of the indigenous Chinese *xiaopin* tradition, he nonetheless subtly deploys Montaignien techniques: he adopts an “unbuttoned,” conversational tone and represents a radically Other culture from a range of contrasting perspectives, both sympathetic and overtly critical. In doing so, Lin taps into a rhetorical repertoire familiar to his Western readers. His style thus renders his essays accessible to Western readers, and makes readers experience a deep affinity with the author, an affinity which neither they nor Lin’s editors fully understood. For if Walsh and Buck had noticed the Montaignien vein running through *The Importance of Living*, they might well have censured Lin for absorbing too many Western influences or failing to retain his essential Chineseness.

Nonetheless, I would contend that far from diluting Lin’s Chineseness or detracting from his ability to attract American readers, the unspoken affinities between Lin’s prose style and that of Montaigne likely enhanced Lin’s popularity in the United States. This conclusion rests on examination both of the source-material explicitly cited in the *The Importance of Living* and of the unacknowledged influences, already half-digested, and buried deep within the body of the text. Analyzing both aspects of this essay collection reveals that by tacitly blending canonical elements of Western literature into his more overt presentation of Chinese culture, Lin succeeded in presenting himself to his American readers as both foreign and familiar. He thus embodied to a tee the role of a cultural translator.

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Notes

1. In these pages, I am using the words “essay” and “*xiaopin*” (小品) roughly interchangeably. For a more complete analysis of the commonalities and discrepancies between these genres, see Handler-Spitz, 2010. See also 郭宏安, 2008.

2. On the originality of his project, Montaigne is quite explicit. He writes: “Authors communicate themselves to the public by some peculiar mark foreign to themselves; I – the first ever to do so by my universal being, not as a grammarian, poet, or jurisconsult, but as Michel de Montaigne.” / “Les auteurs se communiquent au peuple par quelque marque particuliere et estrangere; moy le premier par mon estre universel, comme Michel de Montaigne, non comme grammairien ou poete ou jurisconsulte.” (Montaigne, Villey ed., 2004, 805. Screech, trans., 1987, 908).
3. Zhou Jing (周) briefly compares Lin Yutang to Montaigne on the grounds that both authors value self-expression. (周, 2009).
4. See Chen Duxiu’s (陳獨秀) preface to the collection. The translated essays are: “We reach the same end by discrepant means”/“Par divers moyens l’on arrive à pareille fin” (1.1), “On Sadness”/“De la tristesse” (1.2), “How the soul discharges its emotions against false objects when lacking real ones”/“Comme l’ame discharge ses passions sur des objets faux, quand les vrais luy defaillent” (1.4), “On idleness”/“De l’oysiveté” (1.8), “On Liars”/“Des menteurs” (1.9), “On a ready or hasty delivery”/“Du parler prompt ou tardi” (1.10), “On prognostications”/“Des prognostications” (1.11), “The taste of good and evil things depends on our opinion”/“Que le goust des biens et des maux depend en bonne partie de l’opinion que nous en avons” (1.14), “On fear”/“De la peur” (1.18), “That we should not be deemed happy until after our death”/“Qu’il ne faut juger de nostre heur, qu’après la mort” (1.19), “That to philosophize is to learn how to die”/“Que philosopher c’est apprendre à mourir” (1.20), “On the Power of the Imagination”/“De la force de l’imagination” (1.21), “That our emotions get carried away beyond us”/“Nos affections s’emportent au delà de nous” (1.3), “That our actions are judged by intention”/“Que l’intention juge nos actions” (1.7), “The doings of certain ambassadors”/“Un traict de quelques Ambassadeurs” (1.16), “On Solitude”/“De la solitude” (1.39), “Schoomasters’ Learning”/“Du pedantisme” (1.24), “That it is madness to judge the true and the false from our capacities”/“C’est folie de rapporter le vray et le faux à nostre suffisance” (1.27), “That we weep and laugh at the same thing”/“Comme nous pleurons et rions d’une mesme chose” (1.38), “On Friendship”/“De l’amitié” (1.28), “On the Inequality that is between us”/“De l’inegalité qui est entre nous” (1.42). (鄭振鐸, 1991, 頁 3001-3018).
5. Qian Linsen 錢林森, 1995, 頁 38。See volumes 7 to 12 of 世界文庫, Liang Zongdai, editor 梁宗岱譯。The selections were called 蒙田散文選。蒙田試筆。蒙田著。For more on the translation of Montaigne into Chinese, see 錢林森, 2002。
6. On the popularity of the essay genre in this period, see Charles Laughlin, 2008, especially the introduction.
7. For more on this subject see Tam Kwok-kan, 2001.
8. Montaigne’s additions are included in Liang’s translations.
9. In his introduction to a collection of contemporary essays, Yu Dafu mentions Montaigne by name, but, citing England’s colonial role in Asia and the large numbers of Chinese studying English, maintains that the modern Chinese essay owes its greatest debt to the English

- essayistic tradition. Perusing the debates on the essay genre in modern China, one repeatedly comes across the names of English essayists, while references to Montaigne are few and far between. 郝達夫，1935，頁 8、11。See also 錢林森，1995，頁 35 註 3。
10. For more on this topic see Qian Suoqiao, 2011, chapter six. See also Richard Jean So, *Coolie Democracy*, 2010, chapter three.
 11. Pearl S. Buck "Introduction" to Lin Yutang's *My Country and My People*. (Qian Suoqiao, 2011, 181).
 12. “使用了極端偏激的語言來批判國民性的弱點和民族的劣根性。” 施建偉，1997，頁 42。
 13. In China, Lin founded several periodicals including *The Analects Fortnightly* (論語半月刊), *Cosmic Wind* (宇宙風), and *This Human World* (人間世). Laughlin (2008) examines these publications in detail. For more on Lin's reasons for leaving China, see So, "Collaboration," 2010, 48-49.
 14. See, for instance, his 「論翻譯」in 林語堂，1956，冊二，頁 630-647。

Lin's 1960 *Importance of Understanding*, whose title chimes with that of *The Importance of Living*, contains scores of translations of classical Chinese prose, selected and elegantly rendered into fluent English by Lin. Indeed, it is likely that this volume of translations approximates Lin's initial vision for *The Importance of Living*.
 15. 「代表中國生活藝術及文化精神」。林太乙，1967，頁 171.
 16. “滿口答應下來。” 王兆勝，2006，頁 209。
 17. Qian Suoqiao puts this idea succinctly: “The key to the success of translating an alien culture regarded as the Other is to achieve a subtle balance in the representation of identity and difference.” Qian Suoqiao. 2011, 178.
 18. See Marchi, 1994, chapter three.
 19. Required authors included Rousseau, Sainte-Beuve, Novalis, and Madame de Staël. (Lin Yutang, 1975, 42-43) and Lin Yutang's Harvard transcript. I am grateful to the Robin Carlaw and the research librarians at the Harvard University Archives for making Lin's graduate transcript available to me.
 20. I borrow the term “implied reader” from Iser, 1974.
 21. Lin does occasionally refer specifically to the cannibals, and when he does, he adopts an attitude remarkably similar to Montaigne's. Lin writes: “[A]ll evidences of anthropology point to a pretty universal practice of cannibalism. That was our carnivorous ancestry. Is it therefore any wonder that we are still eating each other in more senses than on—individually, socially and internationally? There is this much to be said for the cannibals, that they are sensible about this matter of killing. Conceding that killing is an undesirable but unavoidable evil, they proceed to get something out of it by eating the delicious sirloins, ribs, and livers of their dead enemies. The difference between cannibals and civilized men seems to be that cannibals and kill their enemies and eat them, while civilized men kill their foes and bury

them, put a cross over their bodies and offer up prayers for their souls. Thus we add stupidity to conceit and a bad temper.” Lin Yutang, 1996, 49.

In addition to recalling Montaigne’s essay on the cannibals, Lin’s allusion to human beings cannibalizing one another socially also strongly invokes Lu Xun’s (魯迅) 1918 short story “Diary of a Madman” (狂人日記).

22. Perhaps most famously Lu Xun attacks the *xiaopin* genre for its frivolity in an essay entitled “The Crisis of the Essay” 「論小品文的危機」。魯迅，1981，冊二。For an English translation of this text, see Lu Xun, 1964, 305-308. For a discussion of these attacks on the *xiaopin* genre, see Laughlin. 2008, 135 ff.
23. 「因原來以為全書須冠以西方現代物質文化之批評，而越講越深，又多論辯。」林語堂。「關於吾國與吾民及生活的藝術之寫作」1978，冊二，頁876。English translation Qian Suoqiao, 2011, 178.
24. This reading of Montaigne is deeply influenced by the scholarship of my teacher, Philippe Desan.
25. “Quand le Roy Pyrrhus passa en Italie, apres qu’il eut reconneu l’ordonnance de l’armée que les Romains luy envoioient au devant: Je ne sçay, dit-il, quels barbares sont ceux-ci (car les Grecs appelloyent ainsi toutes les nations estrangieres), mais la disposition de cette armée que je voy, n’est aucunement barbare.” Montaigne, Villey ed., 2004, 203. Screech trans., 1987, 228.
26. “voilà comment il se faut garder de s’attacher aux opinions vulgaires, et les faut juger par la voye de la raison, non par la voix commune.” Montaigne, Villey ed., 2004, 203. Screech trans., 1987, 229.
27. “il n’y a rien de barbare et de sauvage en cette nation, à ce qu’on m’en a rapporté, sinon que chacun appelle barbarie ce qui n’est pas de son usage.” Montaigne, Villey ed., 2004, 205. Screech trans., 1987, 231.
28. “Nous les pouvons donq bien appeller barbares, eu esgard aux regles de la raison, mais non pas eu esgard à nous, qui les surpassons en toute sorte de barbarie.” Montaigne, Villey ed, 2004, 210. Screech trans., 1987, 236.
29. “Je pense qu’il y a plus de barbarie à manger un homme vivant qu’à le manger mort, à deschirer, par tourmens et par géenes, un corps encore plein de sentiment, le faire rostir par le menu, le faire mordre et meurtrir aux chiens et aux pourceaux (comme nous l’avons, non seulement leu, mais veu de fresche memoire, non entre des ennemis anciens, mais entre des voisins et concitoyens, et, qui pis est, sous pretexte de pieté et de religion), que de le rostir et manger apres qu’il est trespasé.” Montaigne, Villey ed., 2004, 209. Screech trans., 1987, 235-236.

As remarked above (note 21), a strikingly similar passage appears in Lin’s essay “On Having a Stomach” (1996, 49). Given the similarities between these passages, it is difficult to imagine that when writing *The Importance of Living* Lin was not familiar with Montaigne’s *Essays*.

30. “il n’y a aucune espece de trafique; nulle cognoissance de lettres; nulle science de nombres; nul nom de magistrat, ny de superiorité politique; nul usage de service, de richesse ou de pauvreté; nuls contrats; nulles successions; nuls partages; nulles occupations qu’oysives; nul respect de parenté que commun; nuls vestemens; nulle agriculture; nul metal; nul usage de vin ou de bled. Les paroles mesmes qui signifient le mensonge, la trahison, la dissimulation, l’avarice, l’envie, la detraction, le pardon, inouies.” Montaigne, Villey ed., 2004, 206. Screech trans., 1987, 233.
31. “tout nud.” Montaigne, Villey ed., 2004, 3.
32. “Tout cela ne va pas trop mal: mais quoy, ils ne portent point de haut de chausses.” Montaigne, Villey ed., 2004, 214. Screech, trans., 1987, 241.
33. “Nous les pouvons donq bien appeller barbares, eu esgard aux regles de la raison, mais non pas eu esgard à nous, qui les surpassons en toute sorte de barbarie.” Montaigne, Villey ed., 2004, 210. Screech trans., 1987, 236.
34. As if there were only one! Lin Yutang, 1996, 1. Emphasis mine.
35. For a more detailed discussion of the digressive nature of 1930s Chinese *xiaopin*, see Laughlin, 2008, especially chapter one, pp. 49 ff.
36. In his introduction to *The Importance of Living*, Lin expresses admiration for Plato, and muses that he would have liked to present his essays as a series of dialogues. Yet he quickly adds, “I do not mean answers and questions like newspaper interviews ... I mean really good, long, leisurely discourses extending several pages at a stretch, with many detours, [which] back to the original point of discussion by a short cut at the most unexpected spot.” For Lin, then, the essay form derives much of its appeal from its digressive quality, its ability to meander across a range of topics as naturally and unpremeditatedly as a casual discussion among friends.
37. 「因讀來如至友對談，推誠相與，易見哀曲」。「小品之遺緒」。林語堂，1978，冊二，頁 810。
38. Later, Lin would use the similar phrase “unbuttoned mood” to translate Zhuangzi’s (莊子) 「解衣般礴」。Lin Yutang, 1967, 22.
39. 「啓人智慧，發人深思，一句道破，登時妙悟」。「小品之遺緒」。林語堂，1978，冊二，頁 811。The language Lin adopts here is strongly reminiscent of the Zen (Chan) Buddhist tradition.
40. “Des senteurs,” “De l’usage de se vestir,” and “Comme nous rions et pleurons d’une mesme chose” *Essays* I.55, I.36, and I.38.
41. “Je veus qu’on m’y voie en ma façon simple, naturelle et ordinaire.” Montaigne, Villey ed., 2004, 3. Screech trans., 1987, lix.
42. “grossier,” “informe.” Montaigne, Villey ed., 2004, 637. Screech trans., 1987, 724.
43. “C’est icy un livre de bonne foy, lecteur.” Montaigne, Villey ed., 2004, 3. Screech trans., 1987, lix.

44. “Je ne sçay parler qu’en bon escient.” Montaigne, Villey ed., 2004, 637. Translation modified from Screech, 1987, 725.
45. The French word “essai” derives from the Latin *exagium*, meaning “weigh.” For the significance of this etymology to Montaigne’s *Essays*, see Floyd Gray, 1982.
46. “J’adjouste, mais je ne corrige pas.” Montaigne, Villey ed., 2004, 963.
47. Montaigne states: “Mon imagination se contredit elle mesme si souvent et condamne, que ce m’est tout un qu’un autre le face…” “My thought so often contradicts and condemns itself that it is all one to me if someone else does so…” Montaigne, Villey ed., 2004, 924-925. Screech trans., 1987, 1047.
48. On the *xiaopin* genre, see 陳少棠, 1981。See also Pollard, 1973, especially chapter three.
49. For more on this subject see Chaves, 1983 and Chou, 1988. For a critique of these scholars’ views, see Qian Suoqiao, 2011, 131-132.
50. 「現代的散文差不多可說即是公安派的復興」。沈啟無, 「後記。」2005, 頁 268。
51. For more on Spingarn’s influence on Lin, see So, “Collaboration,” 2010, 50.
52. “Ez raisons et inventions que je transplante en mon solage et confons aux miennes, j’ay à escient ommis parfois d’en marquer l’auteur, pour tenir en bride la temerité de ces sentences hastives qui se jettent sur toute sorte d’escrits... Je veux qu’ils donnent une nazarde à Plutarque sur mon nez, et qu’ils s’eschaudent à injurier Seneque en moy.” Montaigne, Villey ed., 2004, 408. Screech trans., 1987, 458.
53. Lin talks about the “digestion of knowledge,” and uses the word “devour” to describe reading. (Lin Yutang, 1996, 80 and 383).
54. “Je ne dis les autres, sinon pour d’autant plus me dire.” Montaigne, Villey ed. 2004, 148. Screech trans., 1987, 166.
55. This statement recalls Montaigne’s position that if a student “embraces the opinions of Xenophon and Plato...they will no longer be theirs but his.” “[S]’il[’]étudiant] embrasse les opinions de Xenophon et de Platon..., ce ne seront plus les leurs, ce seront les seines.” Montaigne, Villey ed., 2004, 151.
56. Pearl Buck, “Report on Y.T.’s book manuscript,” May 31, 1942, The John Day Company Archive. This passage is cited in Qian Suoqiao, 2011, 184.
57. Richard Walsh to Lin Yutang, March 9, 1942, the John Day Company Archive. This passage is also cited in Qian Suoqiao, 2011, 183.

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