

Realistic Plays and Drama Evolution: Yu Shangyuan's Translations of Brander Matthews' Works

Jia-Wei Li

The prominent Chinese dramatist Yu Shangyuan is most often credited with launching the National Theatre Movement, a theater campaign in the mid-1920s that championed a reexamination of the artistry and aesthetics of Chinese indigenous drama. However, prior to this movement, Yu Shangyuan published extensively on dramatic literature and the lives and works of Western dramatists. Although most of these articles were marked as original compositions, they consisted largely of translations of foreign works. Particularly, approximately 30 articles were translated from American theater critic Brander Matthews' two books, *The Principles of Playmaking, and Other Discussions of the Drama* and *The Chief European Dramatists*. The present study fills a gap in modern Chinese theater historiography by examining Yu Shangyuan's early publications, with a specific focus on his translations of Brander Matthews' works. This detailed textual and contextual analysis reveals that Yu Shangyuan was influenced by an evolutionary literary perspective. His linear consciousness of time and history led him to regard modern realistic drama as the zenith of evolution for drama as an art form. Yu Shangyuan's case demonstrates how translation contributed to the construction of theater history and affected the manner in which theater historians comprehend, describe, and reconstruct theatrical forms and conventions.

Keywords: Yu Shangyuan, Brander Matthews, literary evolution, realistic drama

Received: October 20, 2021

Revised: January 3, 2022

Accepted: June 21, 2022

現實主義戲劇與戲劇進化： 余上沅對布蘭德·馬修斯作品的翻譯

李佳偉

戲劇家余上沅因發起著名的國劇運動而享有盛名。國劇運動開展於20世紀20年代中期，倡導重新審視中國本土戲劇的藝術性和美學。事實上，國劇運動前，余上沅已發表大量文章介紹劇本創作法與西方戲劇家及代表作。雖然這些文章多以原創形式呈現，但其中有大量翻譯作品。特別是其中約有30篇文章譯自美國戲劇評論家布蘭德·馬修斯（Brander Matthews）的《戲劇創作原理及其他討論》和《歐洲主要戲劇家》。本文細緻分析了余上沅的早期作品，特別關注他對布蘭德·馬修斯作品的翻譯，以期填補中國現代戲劇史研究在這一課題的空白。對譯文的分析表明，余上沅受文學進化論的影響，產生對時間和歷史的線性認識，將現實主義戲劇視為戲劇進化的頂峰。余上沅的例子表明，翻譯參與了戲劇史的建構，並影響了戲劇史家對戲劇形式和慣例的理解、描述與重構。

關鍵詞：余上沅、布蘭德·馬修斯、文學進化、戲劇現實主義

收件：2021年10月20日

修改：2022年1月3日

接受：2022年6月21日

Introduction

As the spoken drama came onto the Chinese stage in imitation of Western speech-based play (Chen, 2014, p. 1), it is therefore no surprise that translation might have played a constitutive and mediating role in the course of constructing modern Chinese drama. The fact remains, however, that researchers have paid little attention to the translation practices in theatre history, featuring translation “all too frequently theatre and performance historiography’s unacknowledged or even unobserved participant” (Graham-Hones, 2021, p. 307). Such is the case with the study of Yu Shangyuan’s 余上沅 early literary activities. While scholarly work strives to present a panoramic picture of Yu’s theatrical view, there are still some unresolved issues and confusions due to the lack of attention to Yu’s translation practices.

Engaging in theatre some 50 years, Yu is most often credited with leading *guoju yundong* 國劇運動 (The National Theatre Movement), a theatre campaign in Beijing in the mid-1920s that asserted traditional Chinese opera as a formative force in incubating, shaping, and constructing modern Chinese drama, be it orally performed or turned up in written form (Liu, 2016b; Ma, 1989). What has been largely overlooked is Yu’s theatrical engagements prior to the movement, whose voice has been shunted aside in the writing of Chinese theatre history. In fact, Yu published extensively on the practice of dramaturgy and the history of Western drama at the beginning of his artistic career. In particular, Yu translated many important works by Brander Matthews, including seven of the 16 chapters of Matthews’ (1919) *The Principles of Playmaking, and Other Discussions of the Drama* (hereinafter referred as *The Principles*), which provided serviceable guides for young playwrights, and 22 research articles translated from the two appendices of Matthews’ (1916) *The Chief European Dramatists* (hereinafter referred as

European Dramatists), which offered informative introductions to the lives and works of many prominent Western dramatists. Through his translations of Matthews' writings, Yu brought a variety of riveting but often-overlooked ideas to the Chinese theatre circle and made a pioneering effort to the development of modern Chinese drama in a period of dramatic penury.

However, Yu only marked the seven chapters as translations without indicating the source of the subsequent 22 articles, leaving readers unaware that they were reading mediated texts. As a result, most theatre historians who have touched upon Yu's early publications tend to regard Yu's translations of Matthews as original compositions, applauding Yu's profound understanding of the Western theatre tradition (e.g., Cai, 2007, p. 152; Hu, 2001, p. 89; Song, 2002, p. 168). Conclusions drawn under this view are oversimplified, inadequate, and unreliable, because the cross-cultural dialogue between Chinese and Western drama in the translation process, as the following discussion shows, plays a significant role in appreciating the legitimacy of Yu's great erudition as a recent graduate and in understanding many important facets of Yu's view of drama, dramatic literature particular.

Offering to fill a gap in modern Chinese theatre historiography, the present research provides a detailed examination of Yu's early writings published prior to his departure for the United States, with special attention to his translations of Matthews' works. Placing the analysis in a broader discursive context, this article probes into the incentive for Yu's choice of texts, his translation strategies, and the rationale behind these strategies. With Yu's early translation as a case in point, this research attempts to shed light on the role of translation in theatre history and in the writing of said history.

Writing and Translating for Amateur Theatre

Since modern drama was not brought to China until the early 20th century, Chinese intellectuals made various efforts to promote the development of this emerging genre, including translating Western plays, composing Chinese plays, and imparting knowledge on the principles and techniques to Chinese readers (Chen, 2014, pp. 1-15; Liu, 2015, pp. 113-114). With a great deal of gusto, Yu has devoted himself to the advancement of modern drama since the early 1920s. From December 1921, when he published his first article (Yu, 1921), to August 1923, when he left for the United States (Yu, 1923e), Yu authored a total of 44 articles, many of which were long articles published in serial form. With the exception of a prose article celebrating the maple leaves and an essay describing college life (Yu, 1923a, 1923d), all of Yu's other works published during this period are concerning dramatic literature, particularly playwriting techniques and the lives and works of Western dramatists. The playwrights Yu featured ranged widely from the ancient Greeks of the fifth century to the English of the 20th century. No doubt that the broad repertoire reflects Yu's genuine enthusiasm for Western dramatic literature, but it also blurs the perception of Yu's theatrical outlook, as the diversity of the plays covered raises questions about Yu's indiscriminate acceptance of Western drama.

Although Yu labelled only the seven chapters rendered from *The Principles* as translated works, approximately 34 of the 44 articles Yu published during this period were translations, presented and received as originals. They are not faithful renditions of the originals; rather, Yu retains only the general meaning of the original texts without following their exact wording. The source works Yu used were authored by three eminent theatre scholars: Brander Matthews, American critic William Lyon Phelps, and English dramatist Henry Arthur Jones. Of the 34

translated works, four were rendered from Phelps' and Jones' writings. Yu's articles on George Bernard Shaw, French dramatist Edmond Rostand, and English playwright John Galsworthy were translated from Phelps' (1921) *Essays on Modern Dramatists* (Yu, 1927a, 1927b, 1927c), a collection of articles on six dramatists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Phelps, 1921). Yu's article on realistic drama's conventions is an abbreviated translation of Jones' (1897) *The Relations of the Drama to Real Life* (Yu, 1923b), the transcript of a speech Jones delivered at Toynbee Hall, a charitable institution in London, on November 13, 1897 (Jones, 1897).

Aside from these four articles, the remaining 30 translated texts are all rendered from Matthews' works. Except for the article on pageant drama, which is translated from Matthews' *The Development of the Drama* (Chen, 1921; Matthews, 1903), the other 29 articles are all translated from Matthews' *The Principles and European Dramatists*. It is important to realize that many of the articles published by Yu in his early artistic career are translated texts, as it unveils the true process by which these works were created, thus bringing a new perspective to understanding Yu's theatrical view. The following discussion will take these translated works into critical vision to silhouette Yu's intellectual attributes. The discussion is constructed around Yu's translations of Matthews' works, for they make up the majority of Yu's early publications. Meanwhile, Yu's other translations and original compositions published during this period as well as his theatre activities and academic engagements will also be included in the analysis so as to provide additional insight into Yu's intellectual contour.

The point of convergence of Yu's early theatrical engagements is a steadfast conviction in the orthodoxy of *aimeiju* 愛美劇 (amateur drama). Coined by the famous Chinese dramatist Chen Dabei 陳大悲 in a series of articles titled *Aimei de*

xiju 愛美的戲劇 (amateur theatre),¹ *aimeiju*, the combination of the phonetic rendering of “amateur” and the literal translation of “drama,” stood opposite the professional and supposedly degenerate *wenmingxi* 文明戲 (civilized drama), a hybrid dramatic form based on “Western spoken theatre, classical Chinese theatre, and Japanese *shinpa* drama” (Liu, 2013, p. 1). In opposition to *wenmingxi*’s commercialization tendency and its hybrid performing conventions, *aimeiju* was proposed in pursuit of a speech-based and script-centric theatre in China. *Aimeiju*, in short, can be seen as an embryonic form of modern Chinese drama before the term *huaju* 話劇 (spoken drama) was invented (Liu, 2016a, pp. 314-315).

At the time, one of the most influential drama organizations dedicated to the promotion of amateur theatre is *Xin Zhonghua Xiju Xieshe* 新中華戲劇協社 (The New Chinese Drama Association), of which Yu was a devoted and active member (Yu, 1922b). The New Chinese Drama Association, led primarily by Chen Dabei and Pu Boying 蒲伯英, held the flourishing of dramatic literature as the rallying point for advancing amateur theatre (Chen, 1922b). In its organ journal *Xiju* 戲劇 (Drama), Pu (1922a) says on behalf of the association: “To succeed in literary composition, all but the most gifted should study and practice, which requires guiding manuals for reference and masterpieces for imitation” (p. 8). Proclaiming that the key to the maturity of modern Chinese drama rests in the emergence of qualified dramatic literature, Pu Boying in essence makes two demands: to provide serviceable guidelines for playwriting and to introduce archetypal plays for imitation.

It is more than mere speculation to say that Yu’s choice of Matthews’ works was a response to the association’s acting principles because Yu reiterated the association’s approach to drama development in the preface to his translation of

¹ These articles were first published in *Morning Post Supplement* and were collected into a book in 1922 (Chen, 1922a).

The Principles: “It is necessary to first introduce more modern foreign plays and treatises on drama, especially the principles of playmaking” (Yu, 1922b, C2). In the same passage Yu also pays tribute to his peers who were working diligently at the time, in the following terms:

Though the fellow New Chinese Drama Association comrades and those who have been working on drama in China and abroad perceive the failing tendency, we still bear the hope that we will succeed in the end and work hard to study, introduce, compose, and experiment. (Yu, 1922b, C2)

Here, Yu not only proudly labels himself as a member of the association but essentially restates the association’s proposal: to introduce modern foreign plays and treatises on drama, especially on the principles of playmaking. Translating Matthews’ works provided Yu with a viable approach to responding to the association’s proposal, as Matthews had written on almost all facets of drama that were proved serviceable guides to numerous playwrights. In particular, the two books Yu translated conformed exactly to the association’s two objectives, with *The Principles* on playmaking techniques and *European Dramatists* on Western dramatic literature. It can be said that the primary reason for Yu’s translation of Matthews’ two books is that their contents fit squarely with the two dimensions of theatre development proposed by the association, whose instructions are in Yu’s opinion the guiding principle for the development of the Amateur Theatre.

Another important reason for Yu’s choice of texts is probably Matthews’ unquestionable authority in the theatre circle. Occupying in the theatre some 50 years, Matthews established himself as a renowned literary man by writing extensively on theatre. Matthews’ writings were so popular that they were depicted as “monopolizing the shelves of books” (Sayler, 1923, p. 3). Matthews being also a professor at the famous Columbia University, his works always held practical counsel ready to be picked up by young playwrights. So successful an educator was

Matthews that all young playwrights in a decade or so were described as “branded by the same Matthews” (Bernder, 1954, p. vii). Matthews was also well recognized among the period’s Chinese intellectuals. As early as 1916, the eminent Chinese drama theorist Song Chunfang 宋春舫 had already cited Matthews’ *The Development of the Drama* in his discussion of the latest trends in Western theatre (Song, 1916, p. 233). In the same year, the periodical *Dongfang Zazhi* 東方雜誌 (Eastern Miscellany) also introduced Matthews’ idea by publishing a Chinese rendition of Matthews’ “On Putting Literature into the Drama” (Zhang, 1920), which was collected in *The Principles* as the third chapter. Even being Matthews’ student was held in high regard. For example, in his preface to American scholar Lewis Chase’s *Prose Selections or English Essays for Chinese Students*, Hu Shi 胡適 attributed Chase’s wealth of knowledge primarily to being a student and disciple of Matthews (Hu, 1923, p. 1). Matthews’ profound knowledge of drama aroused Yu’s admiration. In the following terms, Yu (1922a) credits four professors of theatre, Matthews, George Baker, William Lyon Phelps, and Barrett Clark, with elevating drama to the status of a full-fledged academic subject in the United States. Yu (1922a) praises Matthews as contributing the most to this cause. It is noteworthy that prior to the publication of the translation of *The Principles* and *European Dramatists*, Yu had already translated Matthews’ *The Development of the Drama* with his friends from Peking University at the request of the Beijing Popular Education Research Institution, but for unknown reasons the translation was not released as originally planned (Tongsu Jiaoyu Yanjiu Hui Congkan, 1922, pp. 119-120). The fact that Yu used the translation of Matthews’ work as a gateway into the intellectual field attests to Matthews’ strong appeal to him.

As a newcomer to the theatre circle, it is only understandable that Yu would want to gain visibility in the intellectual community. Compared with toiling away at composing something that was not yet known to be a success, translating the works

of famous Western writers already sought after by Chinese intellectuals was a more feasible approach to garnering accolades and gaining name recognition. Situated in the Beijing theatrical sphere in the 1920s, the most popular theatre subjects were those raised by the New Chinese Drama Association. It is then not surprising that Yu would translate Matthews' *The Principles* and *European Dramatists*, which echoed the association's call for attention to dramatic literary composition. The following two sections will provide a detailed examination of Yu's translation of Matthews' works. As will be shown in the analysis, the examination of Yu's translation strategies serves as a defining force in delineating Yu's theatrical view.

Yu's Translation of *The Principles* (1919)

The Principles consists of 16 chapters originally published in American periodicals such as *Galaxy*, *Scribner's Monthly*, and *Harper's Monthly* (Weyant, 1965, p. 10). The book touches upon many crucial issues in playwriting, in such areas as crafting characters to the talents of the actors, condensing the story shorn of negligible details, and creating appealing and interconnected dramatic scenarios. Aside from generally applicable principles, Matthews devotes several chapters to specific cases that demonstrate the dependence of drama upon actors, audience, and stage arrangement. Yu (1922a) says in the preface to his translation that he translates only "the most crucial chapters" (C3), as it is prohibitively time-consuming to translate the entire book. Spending a little time sifting through the chapters Yu has chosen, one can see that Yu omits the chapters on specific cases and translates only the chapters on the applicable rules of dramatic composition. The seven translated chapters to a large extent seize the fundamental and permeant dramaturgic principles that are the same throughout the ages and are needed in a varied repertoire.

It is noteworthy that when Yu published these seven translated chapters, most Chinese intellectuals focused only on publishing literary creations with little regard for the methodological issues of playwriting. Taking the works published in *Chenbao Fukan* 晨報副刊 (Morning Post Supplement) as an example, of all the articles published in 1922, only Yu's seven translated chapters of *The Principles* concern playwriting principles. Most articles on drama are playtexts, either composed by Chinese intellectuals or translated from Western works. Yu's seven translated chapters touch upon many topics previously unexplored in Chinese theatre, such as the conventions of music drama, the situations in the play, the relationship between playwrights and actors, and the dramaturgical considerations of stage arrangement in the course of playwriting. In this sense, Yu's translation of Matthews' *The Principles* was among the first attempts in the Chinese intellectual field to see beyond the story of the play and approach playwriting as a professional interest requiring practice.

Proclaiming to present Matthews' "original flavor" (Yu, 1922b, C2), Yu translated these seven chapters in a faithful, almost word-for-word, way. However, Yu adds a footnote to his translation of the 12th chapter, "The Conventions of the Music Drama," the only note in his translation. In this chapter, Matthews recounts the story of Leo Tolstoy's criticism of German composer Richard Wagner's opera *Siegfried* for its lack of conformity to real life. Matthews counters that *Siegfried* was performed with rhyming lyrics rather than real-life dialogue precisely because of music theatre's convention: presenting the story by singing instead of dialogue. Therefore, Matthews argues that the accusation that *Siegfried* does not conform with real-life scenes is groundless and fallacious. Yu faithfully translates the original, but he adds the following comment:

After translating this chapter (the twelfth chapter of the original book), I suddenly felt fearful. At a time when inhumane theatrical barriers have yet

to be removed, those who plauded every move of Yang [Xiaolou] and Mei [Lanfang] would probably say, “See! A comment from an enlightened Westerner can really prove the value of old drama!” Then, no doubt that Yang Yanhui’s lines about missing his mother can be sung with “*pihuang*,” a hairy whip can pretend to be a horse; four actors can act as an army of tens of thousands of people; Guan Yunchang can use a red face, and Cao Cao can use a pink face [...] The loveliest creatures in music drama are those of the romantic world, such as *Madama Butterfly* and *Rhinemaidens*. The realistic scripts would inevitably invite disapproval from the disciples of Tolstoy’s concept of art. (Yu, 1922b, C2)

Yu intends to use this note to distinguish Chinese opera from Western musicals, but he does not provide forceful evidence. Here one can see Yu’s telling disdain for Chinese opera, especially the two iconic opera performers, Yang Xiaolou 楊小樓 and Mei Lanfang 梅蘭芳, whom Yu believes do not deserve any critical attention. He denies the artistic value of traditional Chinese opera because of its three characteristics: The lines are sung to the accompaniment of the *pihuang* 皮黃 tune (a telescoping of two musical styles, the light and happy *xipi* 西皮 and the more serious *erhuang* 二黃); the actor performs unrealistically, using a whip to pretend to be a horse; and the performer sometimes acts with a painted face.

However, all three conventions that Yu believes to be the drawbacks of Chinese opera can also be found in Western music theatre. In particular, they serve perfectly to describe the two music dramas Yu mentions here, Giacomo Puccini’s *Madama Butterfly*, an opera in three acts about the love story of a geisha girl named “Butterfly,” and Richard Wagner’s *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, a cycle of four German-language epic music dramas about the three water-nymphs “Rhinemaidens.” Both *Madama Butterfly* and *Der Ring des Nibelungen* belong to music drama in which the actors sing the lines and move in an unrealistic manner (Matthews, 1919,

pp. 214-215). If the test of reality is applied to them, they are as unnatural and impossible as traditional Chinese opera. As for the painted face, it is recorded that the actors who played the role of Butterfly often concealed their faces with white makeup in staging this play to show that Butterfly was a geisha girl (Morbio, 2016, p. 27). As such, rather than drawing a line between Chinese opera and Western music drama, Yu's note in fact demonstrates the parallels between the two.

Although Western music theatre shares many common characteristics with Chinese opera theatre, Yu does not criticize the content and format of Western music drama, but instead appraises the characters in Western musicals as “loveliest creatures” (Yu, 1922b, C2). It is puzzling that Yu has such divergent attitudes towards what he sees as two clearly similar types of opera. Yu's tolerant attitude towards Western music drama can also be seen in an article Yu published at the suggestion of Chen Dabei and Sun Fuyuan 孫伏園 in response to Pu Boying's proposal to open an opera department at the *Beijing Renyi Juzhuan* 北京人藝劇專 (Beijing People's Art Drama College). On January 5, 1923, Pu Boying published an announcement in *Morning Post Supplement*, in which he says, “We have a general plan to create a form of Chinese opera comparable to the opera of the modern civilized countries. The first step now is to solicit scripts” (Pu, 1923, C3-C4). At the time, Pu Boying had invited Yu to teach “The History of Western Drama” course at the Beijing People's Art Drama College (Pu, 1922b), leading to Yu feeling obliged to comment on the college's curriculum design. While Yu applauds the feat of having established a drama school in Beijing, he does not see fit to include opera training in the curriculum. As a result, he published this letter addressed to Pu Boying in the hope of stimulating a large-scale discussion in the intellectual field. Although Yu insists that music drama should not be promoted, the reasons he provides are not convincing. He says: “We can only acknowledge spoken drama as drama, but not opera. There can be only one standard for a nation's preference and

custom” (Yu, 1923c, C2-C3).² As can be seen in this letter, even when suggesting the negation of music drama curriculum, Yu does not condemn music drama in any articulate way. The only reason he offers is that there can be only one standard of national taste. Yu opposes the promotion of music drama in China not so much because they are inherently flawed and problematic, but because he places music drama at the opposite end of the spectrum from the speech-based spoken drama.

To sum, through translating *The Principles*, Yu brought a variety of topics to Chinese theatre that had rarely been voiced before. Although proclaiming to present a faithful translation, Yu added a commentary with the aim to differentiate traditional Chinese opera from Western music drama. Rather than reflecting upon the divergence, the evidence he provided made manifest many parallels between the two. However, despite being aware of these similarities, Yu only lambasted traditional Chinese opera while showing a tolerant attitude towards Western music drama. What makes Yu’s theatrical view even more puzzling is his translation of Matthews’ *European Dramatists*, in which Yu parallels Chinese opera, which he rejects, with Western drama, which he sees as the model for Chinese playwrights to emulate.

Yu’s Translation of *European Dramatists* (1916)

After publishing the seven translated chapters, Yu serialized another 22 articles in succession in *Morning Post Supplement*, collective entitled “*Guoqu Ershier Xiju Mingjia Ji Qi Daibiao Jiezu*” 過去二十二戲劇名家及其代表傑作

² In his famous book *The Foundation of a National Drama*, Henry Arthur Jones describes the drama that appears after the late 19th century as “national drama” and argues that “there cannot be two main opposing standards of national taste” (Jones, 1913, p. xv). At the time, Yu held Jones in high esteem, as can be seen in the preface to the translation of *The Principles*, in which Yu took the praise that Jones thrust upon Matthews as evidence of Matthews’ intellectual competence. It was influenced by Jones that Yu also agreed that there could only be one drama for a nation’s taste.

(The Past 22 Famous Playwrights and Their Representative Masterpieces), which were primarily translated from the two appendices, “Notes on the Authors” and “Notes on the Plays,” to Matthews’ *European Dramatists*. Yu’s translation conforms to the linguistic features of Chinese vernacular without any redundancies, poor inter-sentence connections, or awkward wording that are often seen in literal translations, leading to this series of articles long being regarded as Yu’s original research articles. In *European Dramatists*, Matthews contends that inadequate attention had been paid to dramas of other tongues than English and hence chooses 21 dramatists from the history of Western theatre to illustrate the progress of dramatic literature from the Greek of the fifth century B.C. to the Scandinavian of the end of the 19th century (Matthews, 1916, p. ix). The plays discussed can be roughly divided into five categories according to the periods they were written: Greek drama, Roman drama, Renaissance drama, French classical drama, and modern drama. Since Yu does not limit his articles to plays in languages other than English, he adds an article concerning Shakespeare and *Hamlet*, featuring *Hamlet* as a representative masterpiece of English-language drama. With the exception of this added article, the other 21 works are arranged in the order of the chapters in *European Dramatists*.

Yu does not render the two appendices in a word-for-word manner. A notable feature of the translation is that Yu correlates many Western dramatic terms with key notions in traditional Chinese opera. Our previous analysis shows that Yu is vehemently opposed to the development of Chinese opera, so much so that he specifically adds a note in his Chinese rendition of *The Principles* to negate Chinese opera’s artistic value. However, in translating *European Dramatists*, Yu utilizes many concepts of Chinese opera to explain the characteristics of Western drama. These correlations cannot be simply seen as a cultural accommodation strategy to familiarize the readers with Western drama, because the conceptual

parallels are made in a selective manner with respect to the type of dramas and the connotation of the terms. Moreover, many of these correlations are incredibly ambiguous and even misleading, which should not be the approach that someone like Yu, who has sufficient knowledge of both Chinese and Western theatre, would have employed. The following discussion will look at five instances that basically cover all types of conceptual correlations in Yu's translation in order to gain a more concrete understanding of the characteristics of these conceptual correlations.

Yu's use of Chinese operatic terminology begins with his presentation of Greek drama. Take, for example, his translation of Matthews' depiction of Aeschylus, which originally reads:

He was the father of Greek tragedy, which had been almost wholly lyrical before him, with only a single actor. Aeschylus made use of a second performer causing the pair of them to assume as many characters as he might need. In the later plays, he followed the example of Sophocles and utilized three actors. (Matthews, 1916, p. 771)

Yu translated it into:

他是希臘悲劇的始祖。在他以前，希臘也未嘗沒有悲劇的雛形，但只是抒情的彈詞，由一個演員獨唱，大概和我們中國的大鼓說書差不多。愛氏才改用兩個演員，後來又學沙福克利斯用三個演員。[He was the father of Greek tragedy. Ancient Greek was not without tragedies before him, but they were just lyrical *tanci* sung by a single actor, like Chinese *dagu shuoshu*. Aeschylus made use of a second performer and later followed the example of Sophocles and utilized three actors]. (Yu, 1922h, C3)

Yu translates the lyrics sung by the Greek chorus into *tanci* 彈詞 (lit. plucking lyrics) and the one-actor performance of the lyrics into *dagu shuoshu* 大鼓說書 (lit. storytelling with a big drum). The lyrics in the original text refer to the odes sung by the Greek chorus. Greek drama usually consisted of lyrics sung by the

chorus and spoken words recited by the performers (Billings et al., 2013, pp. 1-3). *Tanci* performances combined speaking and singing (Apei, 1986, p. 269), and their scripts consisted of prose lines for speaking and verse lines for singing (Zheng, 1996, pp. 514-515). In other words, only the verses in *tanci* resemble the lyrics in Greek drama. Similarly, *dagu shuoshu* is also not fully comparable to Greek drama's "one-actor performance" because the two differ in the number of actors and the way they are presented. Growing out of the lyrical hymns to the god of wine Dionysus, Greek drama was initially performed only by the chorus. In time, the most ingenious member of the chorus was made the leader and entrusted with the speaking part of the performance (Matthews, 1903, pp. 43-45). The Greek drama performance, in which the leader speaks and the chorus comments lyrically, is the so-called "one-actor performance." Consisting of both the performance of *dagu* 大鼓, the big drum, and *shuoshu* 說書, storytelling, *dagu shuoshu* performance was usually conducted by only one actor in the form of storytelling while playing the drum (Zheng, 1996, p. 544). That is to say, the Greek "one-actor performance" is not really staged by a single actor but is presented through the dialogue between a chief actor and a chorus of a host of other performers, which is divergent from the one-man operatic performance *dagu shuoshu* in respect to the number of actors and the manner of presentation.

Aside from Greek drama, Yu also employs Chinese operatic terms in translating the original elaborations on Roman drama. For instance, in introducing Plautus' *The Captives*, Matthews (1916) says:

The prologue of *The Captives* was probably prefixed twenty or thirty years after the death of Plautus and after the Roman audiences had so degenerated in attention and in intelligence that it was held to be necessary to explain the plot in advance to lazy-minded spectators, many of whom might be only doubtfully familiar with Latin. (p. 779)

Yu translated this passage into:

本劇的“楔子”，大概是卜洛特士死後二三十年才加進去的，此時羅馬的觀眾已變成墮落的人民，其注意力及智識都有了大退化，他們懶惰非常，許多人連拉丁文也丟生了，若不在全劇開演之前加以極明瞭的解釋，觀眾便不肯稍用思想去領悟劇中的構局了。於是楔子反成了劇本的重要部分，這是何等的可憐！[The “*xiezi*” in the play was probably added twenty or thirty years after the death of Plautus. By this time, the Roman audiences had degenerated in attention and in intelligence. They were so lazy that many of them could no longer read Latin. Without explaining the plot in advance, they would not understand the play’s structure. Therefore, *xiezi* became an essential part of the play. How pathetic is this!] (Yu, 1922d, C1-C2)

Yu employs *xiezi* 楔子 (lit. a wedge) to explain the introductory prologue in the original. The prologue is a common element of Roman drama, appearing in the form of a monologue or dialogue preceding the chorus’ entry to set the scene and allow the audience to be fully appraised of the story before the performance (Howatson, 2011, p. 76). For example, Plautus’ *The Captives* contains an 800-words prologue that introduces the synopsis of the story before the dialogue (Matthews, 1916, pp. 117-118). *Xiezi* can be both a synopsis of the play or a supplement to the story left untold (Zhang, 2016, pp. 86-87). The prologue is placed at the beginning, while *xiezi* can be placed at the beginning or in the middle of the play. In other words, “prologue” and “*xiezi*” are similar in meaning but not exactly equivalent.

In addition, Yu also correlates Chinese operatic notions and Western dramatic concepts when introducing the plays of the 17th century French classical period. For example, when presenting *Rasmus Montanus*, depicted by Matthews as a parody of the work of the classicist playwright Molière (Matthews, 1916, p. 777), Yu interprets the original “soliloquy” with “*wo benshi*” 我本是 (lit. I really am), a

form of narrative in Chinese opera in which the actor reveals his thoughts directly to the audience. The original is: “Holberg follows Molière in letting his characters reveal themselves freely in explanatory soliloquies, addressed obviously to the spectators” (Matthews, 1916, p. 777).

Yu translated it into:

《孟唐納斯》的大短處，是他愛學莫利哀由劇中人物去用“獨語”。這種向觀眾自述“我本是”一類的辦法，在現代是不能容的。[The biggest drawback of *Rasmus Montanus* is that it follows Molière, having the characters speak in “soliloquies.” This “*wo benshi*” approach that addresses directly to the audience is unacceptable in modern theatre]. (Yu, 1922f, C1-C2)

Unlike soliloquy, which is regarding a person’s thoughts, *wo benshi* lines focus on the background information about the characters, such as where the character lives and what he or she does for a living. For instance, in the famous *jingju* 京劇 opera *Kongchengji* 空城計 (The Empty City Ruse), the character Zhuge Liang 諸葛亮 says: “*Wo benshi Wolonggang san man dan de ren*” 我本是臥龍崗散漫淡的人 (Once I lived in Wolong Gang without any commitments) (China Theatre Press, 1990, p. 166). By saying “*wo benshi*,” the character directly declares to the audience to pronounce his background as having lived in a secluded place before. Although both the soliloquies in Molière’s plays and *wo benshi* lines in Chinese opera allow for colloquies between the actor and the audience, they are not equivalent.

Yu also made conceptual correlations in translating the introduction of Pierre Corneille another iconic playwright of the classical period of the 17th century. Yu utilizes the Chinese operatic concept *chujiang ruxiang* 出將入相 (lit. out as a general, in as a prime minister) to describe the doors on the 17th century French stage. Matthews’ original text is:

A bare stage with hangings at the back and sides and with doors and other properties which serve to localize the residences of different characters. The

stage is neutral ground, nowhere in particular where all the characters can meet at will without asking where they are. (Matthews, 1916, pp. 773-774)

Yu translated it into:

只剩下一座很淺的空台，背後掛上幔子，開幾個“出將入相”式的門。佈景和服飾都還沒有成問題，平臺稱為“中立地”，幕上的門，和古代舞臺的一樣，常用以代表登場人物的住所。這些人物走出台來，在中立地上隨意相會，也不問他們究竟是在什麼地方。[There was only a bare stage with hangings at the back and with doors in the style of “*chujiang ruxiang*.” The sets and costumes were not taken into consideration then. The stage was called “neutral ground.” Like those on the ancient stage, the curtain doors were often used to represent the residences of the characters. These characters would come out and meet at the neutral ground without asking where they were]. (Yu, 1922e, C2)

The so-called “*chujiang ruxiang*” is a composition of *chujiang* 出將 and *ruxiang* 入相, referring to the entrance and exit of a traditional opera performance (Xue, 1981, p. 81). In Chinese opera theatre, the entire stage is decorated with hanging embroideries, *chujiang*, *ruxiang*, and *shoujiu* 守舊 (lit. sticking to old ways), which were placed on the right, the left, and the middle of the stage (Xue, 1981, p. 78). It is problematic to equate the doors on Corneille’s stage to the *chujiang* and *ruxiang*, for the doors on Corneille’s stage can be represented either by draperies or by cardboards (Matthews, 1903, pp. 229-230), yet *chujiang* and *ruxiang* are hanging embroideries being moved to the position parallel to the sidewalls to form a door-like setup (Xue, 1981, p. 81). Moreover, *chujiang* and *ruxiang* have strong cultural connotations, which enjoin the actors to fit into the role whether playing the role of *jiang* 將, the general, or *xiang* 相, the prime minister.

As the previous analysis shows, the Chinese operatic notions employed by Yu cannot be fully equated with the Western dramatic terms in the original. With these

correlations, Yu can only present an incomplete and somehow distorted image of Western drama. It is noteworthy that Yu had already gained sufficient knowledge of Chinese and Western theatre when he translated these works. As a graduate of Peking University's English Department (Yan & Rong, 1983, p. 64), no doubt Yu had a profound understanding and appreciation of Western drama. Born and raised in the late Qing and Republican periods when traditional Chinese opera was prevalent throughout the country, Yu had been frequently exposed to indigenous Chinese drama performances from a young age (Yan & Rong, 1983, pp. 63-64). Given his upbringing and educational background, it is safe to say that Yu intentionally refused to employ a more reasonable and comprehensible approach to interpreting the original, instead purposefully alluding to Chinese opera in his translation.

To see why Yu employs Chinese operatic terms, an examination of the nature of the words Yu uses and where he places them in his translation is in order. As for the nature of the terms, most of the Chinese operatic concepts used by Yu are regarding the actors conversing with the audience. With the exception of *chujiang* and *ruxiang*, all other Chinese operatic concepts are regarding the characters talking directly to the audience. *Tanci* and *dagu shuoshu* both allow for colloquies between actors and the audience; *wo benshi* narrative and *xiezi* are lines addressed to the spectators. Furthermore, Yu expresses his dissatisfaction with the actors interacting with the audience. According to Yu (1922g), the method of acting in Greek theatre in which the actors dialogue directly with the audience is "a severe drawback." Likewise, Yu (1922f) adds a comment after interpreting soliloquy with "*wo benshi*," arguing that actors directly expressing their inner feelings to the spectators is "unacceptable in modern theatre" (C1-C2). Further, the prologue in Plautus' plays, in which the actors introduce the main characters and their interrelationships to the audience before the commence of the acting, is depicted by

Yu as “pathetic” (Yu, 1922d, C1-C2). It is clear from these descriptions that Yu opposes any direct communication between the characters and the audience, necessitating the story to be presented through dialogue.

In terms of where Yu employs Chinese operatic concepts, these concepts appear only in articles about the playwrights of Greece, Rome, and the French classical period of the 17th century. When translating the articles about playwrights from the 19th century onward, in this case after Victor Hugo, Yu does not use Chinese operatic concepts to interpret the original. For example, Yu withholds from using *wo benshi* to explain the soliloquy in Hugo’s *Hernani*, albeit the argumentative monolog bestowed on the King in the play is regarded as “one of the longest soliloquies discoverable in all dramatic literature” (Matthews, 1907, p. 181). It is understandable that Yu would see *Hernani* as the dividing line, since *Hernani* was believed to have “opened for the coming of modern realism” (Styan, 1981a, p. 3) with its renunciation of the neoclassical laws of dramatic unity. In other words, when Yu introduced the plays that could be classified as modern drama, even if he found elements that were the same as those in Chinese opera, such as the soliloquy in *Hernani*, he would not employ Chinese operatic terms to interpret the original text. It is true that in the 1920s, due to the lack of a uniform way of translating Western dramatic terms, there were still cases where the translators utilized Chinese operatic terms to interpret Western drama. But Yu’s translation cannot be seen as one of such cases because of the inconsistent way in which Yu uses Chinese opera terminology. Yu’s selective use of traditional Chinese opera terms according to the period in which the work is published is what makes Yu’s translation unique and worthy of special scholarly attention.

Before we look further into the reasons behind Yu’s strategy, let us give a brief summary of the findings so far. The textual analysis of Yu’s translation of Matthews’ *The Principles and European Dramatists* has yielded many interesting

findings and some unresolved questions. First, an examination of Yu's added note in his translation of *The Principles* suggests that Yu opposes traditional Chinese opera but is tolerant of Western music drama that he considers comparable to Chinese opera. The question is why Yu condemns only Chinese opera but is receptive to Western opera, despite their obvious similarities. Second, although aware that Chinese and Western dramatic terms are not interchangeable, Yu insists on using Chinese operatic terms to describe Western drama in his Chinese renditions. An analysis of the articles in which the Chinese operatic terms appear suggests that Yu only employs Chinese operatic terms in translating articles regarding pre-19th century playwrights. This finding suggests that Yu seems to be more tolerant of the drama approaching the present era than that of the remote past. The question is: Was the era in which the playwright lived the basis for Yu's decision as to which articles utilized Chinese operatic notions and which did not? Third, the Chinese operatic concepts that Yu employed are all regarding the characters talking directly to the spectators, which Yu finds problematic and unacceptable. Yu's rejection of actors conversing with the spectators suggests that the drama he advocates might be realistic drama since actors turning inwards, addressing each other rather than the audience, is one of the main characteristics of realistic drama. If this conjecture is correct, then the subsequent question that needs to be answered is: What is the underlying reason for Yu's espousal of realistic drama? The next section will attempt to answer the above three questions by analyzing the context in which Yu's translation practices were conducted, especially Yu's other literary activities during this period. Our answer is that Yu was influenced by the evolutionary view of drama and regarded the realistic paradigm as the pinnacle of drama evolution.

Realistic Drama as the Zenith of Literary Evolution

What we can ascertain first is that Yu was a staunch proponent of modern realistic drama at the time. Along with the translation of Matthews' works, Yu (1923b) also authored an article to clarify the misinterpretation of realistic plays, in which Yu says: "Ever since Ibsen proposed the idea of 'breaking a wall,' many people have misunderstood the conversation and movement on the stage as indistinguishable from those of real life" (p. 19). The so-called "breaking a wall," or "the fourth wall," is the ruling principle for the medium of realistic drama (Sprinchorn, 1998, p. 40; Washburn-Freund, 1924, p. 47). Highly indignant at this misunderstanding, Yu (1923b) outlines two characteristics of realistic drama: It eschews extreme attention to detail and discounts monologue as a means of story presentation (p. 21). True to Yu's perception, realistic drama demands verisimilitude and authentic representation of real life on stage, with the story unfolding as if it were taking place in a room with a wall removed (Antoine, 1903/2000, pp. 52-53). It is generally agreed that the realistic movement lasted about 30 years, falling between the publication of Henrik Ibsen's first social realistic play *The Pillars of Society* in 1877 and perhaps Shaw's *The Doctor's Dilemma* in 1906 (Styan, 1981a, p. 1). The realists of the time tended to depict and put on stage only what could be verified by observing ordinary life, resulting in the characters using genuine language spoken in everyday life and talking to each other instead of the spectators, as if unaware that someone was watching them (Styan, 1981a, pp. 2-6). Like Ibsen, he tends to write stories of middle-class life in the genuine language used in real-life conversations and arrange his characters to act according to the canons of probability that the spectators can find in their own experiences. Though focusing on mimicry and representation, realistic drama does not advocate ostensible resemblance, but rather calls for a profound representation

of the truth and nature of reality. Yu's strenuous efforts to clarify misconceptions about realistic drama reflects his support and recognition of the realistic paradigm. It is this espousal of realistic drama that led to Yu's disdain for the representation of the trivialities of real life and his opposition to the declamatory style of presentation of the monologue, soliloquy, and aside.

Although Yu devotes this article specifically to realistic drama, Yu only describes the characteristics of the realistic paradigm without offering any concrete explanation of the reasons for such an advocacy. This is in fact because Yu's endorsement of realism is not due, at least not entirely, to his attraction to its characteristics, but to a large extent due to his intuitive faith in anything that is "new" under the influence of an evolutionary literary view of drama.

At the turn of the century, the biological theory of natural selection stroke fire in China and had a major impact on the progress of modern Chinese theatre. Propelled by Yan Fu 嚴復 and many other progressive intellectuals, evolutionary theory was soon applied to "social phenomena and politics and even touched on the national crisis through its clear watchwords 'natural selection' and 'the survival of the fittest'" (Wang, 2011, p. 140). The notion that Chinese scholars should abandon old and outdated conventions eventually took hold in the intelligentsia. The reception of a Social Darwinian concept of evolution in China led to "a linear consciousness of time and history," making manifest the polarization of "present and past" and placing the present as "the pivotal point marking a rupture with the past" (Lee, 1990, pp. 110-111). This linear historical framework was thoroughly manifested in the field of drama through the endorsement of many prominent intellectuals. For instance, Hu Shi argues in "*Wenxue Jinhua Guannian Yu Xiqu Gailiang*" 文學進化觀念與戲劇改良 (The Evolutionary Literary View and Drama Improvement) that Chinese drama will eventually follows Western theatre, evolving from the musical form to a modern speech-based style. Since evolving to "the most advanced" form is an

inevitable historical stage, Hu Shi continues, Chinese intellectuals should strive to help Chinese drama develop to the evolved form by completely discarding traditional Chinese opera conventions (Hu, 1918, pp. 4-5). For Hu Shi and many Chinese intellectuals of the time, the evolved form of drama was the Ibsenian social-critical play. Since the end of the 1910s, the influence of Ibsenian drama became overwhelming in Chinese theatre under the fellow *Xinqingnian* 新青年 (New Youth) intellectuals' ardent promotion of realistic drama's social efficacy. Chinese dramatists embraced Western realistic plays, as represented by those of Ibsen, to the extent that they held the Ibsenian social-critical play as a superb model for dramatists to imitate and committed themselves to writing well-made plays of moral concerns (Liu, 2015, pp. 110-111).

Yu was influenced by the theatrical environment of his time. In the preface to his translation of *European Dramatists*, Yu (1922c) says:

In recent years, most people who study drama prefer modern drama, and so have I. However, if we do not systematically study the past drama, does it mean that the researcher does not need to read the history of what he is studying? (C2)

Here, Yu (1922c) notes that, like most of the period's intellectuals, he also advocates "the drama of the present," and that he embarks on the drama of the past is to advance "the drama of the present." Such a dichotomy of reverence for the present and detachment from the past suggests an evolutionary view of drama that celebrates the continuous drama development from old to new, past to present, and traditional to modern. Since Yu held an evolutionary view of drama, it is not surprising that the realistic drama that emerged at the end of the 19th century would naturally fall under Yu's category of "new," "present," and "modern." More crucially, the theatre circle's recognition of the social efficacy of drama also added credit to the realistic paradigm being identified by Yu as the road ahead, one that Chinese theatre was destined to take.

After knowing Yu's endorsement of realism and his evolutionary literary view, the three questions we posed earlier can be answered. The reason why Yu denounces the actor's directly dialogue with the audience is that he believes that the pinnacle of drama evolution is the realistic drama that can "break a wall." In Yu's view, the defect of Western theatre in the past rests only in its narrative mode. In many other facets, such as devising a dominating action, condensing the story shorn of negligible details, and eschewing themes of limited attraction, the past Western drama can still benefit Chinese playwrights. This is why, despite his trivialization of the plays of the distant past, Yu still strives to introduce the Western drama in the history.

The basis for Yu's decision on which articles to use Chinese operatic terms is closely related to the era in which the plays were published. Viewing Chinese opera and the Western drama of the remote past as deplorable fossils in the progress of drama evolution, Yu employs Chinese operatic terms to depict Western plays of ancient Greece, Rome, and French Classicism. But in depicting the plays approaching the 20th century, such as those of Victor Hugo, Yu is reluctant to acknowledge the resemblance between these Western plays and traditional Chinese opera.

Furthermore, the reason why Yu embraces Western music drama while denounces traditional Chinese opera is in close relation to him regarding music drama as "present" and Chinese opera as "past." In the 19th and 20th centuries, Western music drama is credited with largely contributing to the in-depth exploration of the new art. Particularly is Richard Wagner's game-changing reform of opera, the influence of which has loomed modern theatre since the mid-19th century. Not only did Wagner revolutionize Western music theatre, but he also brought aesthetic theory to modern theatre, inspiring a generation of theatre artists, such as Adolphe Appia and Gordon Craig, to probe into the relationship between life and art and to search for means of eliciting an aesthetic experience in theatre

(Styan, 1981b, pp. 5-9). In contrast, Yu (1922b) believes that Chinese opera theatre has made no progress at all and has the tendency to degenerate into commercial manipulation of people's mindlessness.

Although Yu champions realistic drama, he seems to attach most importance of realism to the style of realism other than the content. Realistic drama is "realistic" in its style of presentation as well as the content of the story. It tends to present stories that can be observed in ordinary life by using genuine language spoken in everyday conversations. Yu appears to be unconcerned with whether the content of the play is consistent with "real life," but simply insists on developing the story through the dialogue of the characters.

Yu's adherence to the style of realistic drama can be seen in three other articles on Western dramatists published in the same period, which introduce Shaw's *Back to Methuselah*, Edmond Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac*, and Galsworthy's *Justice* (Yu, 1927a, 1927b, 1927c). These three articles, translated primarily from William Lyon Phelps' (1921) *Essays on Modern Dramatists*, feature different themes and varying linguistic styles. *Back to Methuselah* consists of a prologue and a series of five plays. It expounds on Shaw's philosophy of creative evolution in an extended dramatic parable that progresses through time from the Garden of Eden to 31,920 CE. *Cyrano de Bergerac* is written in verse. It is based on the life of the French novelist and playwright Cyrano de Bergerac. Galsworthy's *Justice* reveals the harshness of life that brutalizes men on the breadline by presenting the evils of separate confinement in the prison system. Yu's criteria for the choice of plays to introduce do not seem to be fixed in terms content, language, or genre (either musical or verbal). *Back to Methuselah* and *Justice* are written in prose, while *Cyrano de Bergerac* is written in verse. The stories they tell are not all common to ordinary life. For instance, the story unfolded in *Back to Methuselah* takes place in a world that is not earthly, which is completely beyond what readers and audiences can find

in their own experiences. While differing in content and language, all three plays share a common stylistic characteristic: The stories unfold through the characters' dialogues. In other words, although Yu regards realistic drama as the zenith of drama evolution, he does not require the characters to display ordinary life or to use genuine language spoken in everyday conversations. For Yu, the most pertinent feature of realistic drama is that it should be realistic in style, with characters turning inwards addressing each other rather than the audience.

It is worth noting that Yu's preoccupation with dramatic literature does not mean that he finds the visualization of drama to be less critical. In fact, *The Principles* that Yu chose to translate featured extensive consideration to the theatrical potency of the dramatic text, as can be seen in one of the most frequently quoted lines from the first chapter: "The word 'play' carries with it the idea of an audience" (Matthews, 1919, p. 2). It is just that it is probably easier for Yu, as a newcomer to theatre, to approach theatre studies from playwriting, which can be learned from literary reading, than from stagecraft, which can hardly be adequately fathomed without visual reference and practical training.

Conclusion

The detailed analysis of Yu's early works adds significant nuance to a comprehensive understanding of Yu's theatrical view. From the publication of his first article in December 1921 to his departure for the United States in August 1923, Yu authored more than 40 articles on dramas in various periods and locations, from the Greek of the fifth century to the Britain of the early 20th century, offering a rare glimpse into the progress of Western drama and the conventions in Western theatre. Although most of these works were presented and received as original compositions, they actually contained many translations

rendered from the works of three Western authors, William Lyon Phelps, Henry Arthur Jones, and Brander Matthews. In particular, around 30 of them were translated from Matthews' *The Principles* and *European Dramatists*.

The inclusion of Yu's translation helps address many previously unresolved issues, including the impetus for Yu's extensive elaboration on dramatic composition, the reasons for Yu's inconsistent attitude towards Chinese and Western musicals, and the fundamental rationale behind his theatrical engagements. To start with, a contextual analysis reveals that Yu's interest in dramaturgy and Western plays was due to his endorsement of the acting principles proposed by the New Chinese Drama Association, one of the most prominent societies dedicated to the promotion of amateur theatre in the 1920s. Meanwhile, Yu's constant emphasis on Matthews' fame and authority reflects his intention to garner recognition as a recent graduate. In this sense, the milieu of the theatre field and Yu's social status served as the decisive factors in the translator's choice of texts.

A detailed examination of Yu's translated texts complicates our understanding of Yu's dramatic view, for it demonstrates the divergent attitudes Yu holds towards different forms of drama across times and places. An analysis of Yu's *The Principles* shows that Yu stands in direct opposition to Chinese opera, but his objection is not entirely compelling, as he is also embracing Western musicals, which he sees as similar to Chinese opera in terms of stage conventions. A microscopic exploration of Yu's translation of *European Dramatists* shows that Yu deliberately parallels traditional Chinese opera and Western drama of the past on the one hand and adamantly denounces the theatrical convention of actors conversing directly with the audience on the other.

After bringing Yu's other works published in the examined period into critical vision, we find that Yu was influenced by the idea of literary evolution and grew a linear sense of history and time, resulting in him regarding realistic drama as the

pinnacle of drama evolution. This is why Yu dismisses the parallels between traditional Chinese opera and Western musicals and positions traditional Chinese opera and Western drama of the past on the same axis. It is also important to note that by realism Yu refers more to the stylistic form of drama than to its content, in a sense that Yu insists on unfolding the story through the characters' dialogue but concedes that the play does not have to be contextualized in a quotidian, everyday experience.

The detailed textual examination introduces much-needed nuance to our understanding of not only Yu's theatrical outlook, but more at large, of the contemporaneous view of the theatre which Yu represented. Yu's opposition to Chinese opera was not due to his belief that it lacked any artistic merit, but rather was a choice made to conform to the prevailing idea of literary evolution championed by many of the period's prominent intellectuals, such as Hu Shi. This reminds us that the intellectuals who opposed or even vehemently attacked Chinese musical scores in the early 1920s might not have really considered Chinese indigenous drama to hold no artistic value. Their distaste for traditional Chinese opera was more likely reflective of the mainstream iconoclastic trend to replace the previous less evolved form of drama, in this case, traditional Chinese opera with a more evolved, the Ibsenian social-critical play. Since Yu's opinions on realistic drama and Chinese opera were not entirely based on an appraisal of their values, it is not surprising that Yu's attitudes towards realism and Chinese indigenous drama would change in his subsequent theatrical activities. In 1925, upon returning to Beijing from studying in the United States for about two years (Yan & Rong, 1983, p. 68), Yu united a group of returned students and launched the famous "National Theatre Movement," in which Yu overturned his previous objection of Chinese opera on the one hand and proposed an anti-realistic paradigm that stood in direct opposition to the Ibsenian realistic theatre on the other. The reasons for the change

in Yu's theatrical thinking are in close relation to Yu's experiences in the United States, which this paper has been unable to cover. A more detailed discussion of Yu's shift of emphasis is a task that awaits further research.

Yu's case epitomizes the important role that translation plays in the construction of theatre history and the new perspectives that translation as a methodological approach can bring to theatre historiography. Since Yu saw translation as a legitimate way to attach value and significance to his works, his early publications featured a plethora of translated texts, which exerted a significant influence on theatre historians' understanding of Yu's view of drama and the period's theatrical discourse. Meanwhile, Yu's case shows the fresh perspectives and methodologies that translation studies can bring to theatre historiography and hence sheds light on the importance for an embrace of interdisciplinarity and multiplicity, of voices and approaches, in theatre and performance historiography.

References

- Antoine, A. (2000). Commentary on *la mise en scène* (J. M. Bernstein, Trans.). In C. Innes (Ed.), *A sourcebook on naturalist theatre* (pp. 52-53). Routledge. (Original work published 1903)
- Apei, W. (1986). *The Harvard dictionary of music*. The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Bernder, J. E. (1954). *The theatre of Brander Matthews* (Publication No. 0008270) [Doctoral dissertation, University of Michigan]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Billings, J., Dudelmann, F., & Macintosh, F. (2013). Introduction. In H. Billings, F. Budelmann, & F. Macintosh (Eds.), *Choruses, ancient and modern* (pp. 1-11). Oxford University Press.
- Cai, D. S. (2007). *Lingyan kan zuojia* [Viewing writers from a different perspective]. Showwe .
- Chen, D. B. (1921, October 25). Bejing chuci chuxian de lianheju [The first pageant drama in Beijing]. *Chenbao Fukan*, C2.
- Chen, D. B. (1922a). *Aimei de xiju* [Amateur theatre]. Morning Post Society.
- Chen, D. B. (1922b, January 24). Guanyu Xiju Yuekan de baogao [A report on Drama Monthly]. *Chenbao Fukan*, C3.
- Chen, X. M. (2014). Introduction. In X. M. Chen (Ed.), *The Columbia anthology of modern Chinese drama* (pp. 1-30). Columbia University Press.
- China Theatre Press. (Ed.). (1990). Kongchengji [The empty city ruse]. In China Theatre Press (Ed.), *Jingju xuanbian* (Vol. 2, pp. 139-216).
- Graham-Hones, J. (2021). Translation and/as theatre and performance historiography: Towards a reconsideration of a neglected but omnipresent challenge. In T. C. Davis & P. W. Marx (Eds.), *The Routledge companion to theatre and performance*

historiography (pp. 307-324). Routledge.

Howatson, M. C. (2011). *The Oxford companion to classical literature*. Oxford University Press.

Hu, B. (2001). Chuangjian biaoqian minzu jingshen he minzu linghun de zhongguojia – Yu Shangyuan guojia lilun pingxi [Creating national theater to represent national heart and soul – Criticism of Yu Shangyuan's national theater theory]. *Journal of Shandong Teachers' University*, 46(5), 89-92. <http://doi.org/10.3969/j.issn.1001-5973.2001.05.022>

Hu, S. (1918, October 15). Wenxue jinhua guannian yu xiju gailiang [The evolutionary literary view and drama improvement]. *Xinqingnian*, 5(4), 4-17.

Hu, S. (1923). Xu [Forward]. In L. Chase (Ed.), *Prose selections or English essays for Chinese students* (p. 1). Peking Educational Supply.

Jones, H. A. (1897). *The relations of the drama to real life: A lecture delivered at Toynbee Hall*. The Chiswick Press.

Jones, H. A. (1913). *The foundation of a national drama*. Chapman & Hall.

Lee, L. O. F. (1990). In search modernity: Reflections on a new mode of consciousness in modern Chinese literature and thought. In P. A. Cohen & M. Goldman (Eds.), *Ideas across cultures: Essays in honor of Benjamin Schwartz* (pp. 109-135). Harvard University Press. https://doi.org/10.1163/9781684172894_007

Liu, S. Y. (2013). *Performing hybridity in colonial-modern China*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Liu, S. Y. (2015). Hong Shen and adaptation of western plays in modern Chinese theater. *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture*, 27(2), 106-171.

Liu, S. Y. (2016a). Modern Chinese theatre. In S. Y. Liu (Ed.), *Routledge handbook of Asian theatre* (pp. 311-327). Routledge.

Liu, S. Y. (2016b). The cross currents of modern theatre and China's national theatre movement of 1925-1926. *Asian Theatre Journal*, 33(1), 1-35. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S002229331600001>

doi.org/10.1353/atj.2016.0015

- Ma, M. (1989). Lun Yu Shangyuan yu guoju yundong [On Yu Shangyuan and the national theatre movement]. *Yishu Baijia*, 3, 119-126.
- Matthews, B. (1903). *The development of the drama*. Scribner
- Matthews, B. (1907). Concerning the soliloquy. *Putnam's Magazine*, 1, 180-186.
- Matthews, B. (1916). *The chief European dramatists*. The Riverside Press.
- Matthews, B. (1919). *The principles of playmaking, and other discussions of the drama*. C. Scribner's Sons.
- Morbio, V. C. (2016). One-way trip to Japan. In M. P. Ferraris (Ed.), *Madama Butterfly: A glimpse into the Archivio Storico Ricordi*. Bertelsmann.
- Phelps, W. L. (1921). *Essays on modern dramatists*. The Macmillan Company.
- Pu, B. Y. (1922a). Jinnian de xiju [This year's drama]. *Xiju*, 2(1), 5-9.
- Pu, B. Y. (1922b, October 5). Tongxun [Correspondence]. *Shishi Xinbao*, P3, C4.
- Pu, B. Y. (1923, January 5). Renyishe zhengmu geju juben de gonggao [Announcement of the call for opera scripts by the People's Art Society]. *Chenbao Fukan*, C3-C4.
- Sayler, O. (1923). *Our American theatre*. Benjamin Blom.
- Song, B. Z. (2002). *Canque de xiju chibang: Zhongguo xiandai xiju lilun piping shigao* [The missing wings of the theatre: A critical history of modern Chinese theatre theories]. Communication University of China Press.
- Song, C. F. (1916). Xiqu shang de demokelaxi zhi qingxiang [The tendency of democracy in xiqu]. In C. F. Song, *Song Chunfang lunju diyiji* (pp. 232-241). China Bookstore.
- Sprinchorn, E. (1998). The unspoken text in Hedda Gabler. In C. Innes & F. Marker (Eds.), *Modernism in European drama: Ibsen, Strindberg, Pirandello, Beckett: Essays from modern drama* (pp. 40-56). University of Toronto Press. <https://doi.org/10.3138/9781442677319-006>

- Styan, J. L. (1981a). *Modern drama in theory and practice: Realism and naturalism* (Vol. 1). Cambridge University Press.
- Styan, J. L. (1981b). *Modern drama in theory and practice: Symbolism, surrealism and the absurd* (Vol. 2). Cambridge University Press.
- Tongsu Jiaoyu Yanjiu Hui Congkan. (1922). Handu [Announcement]. In Tongsu Jiaoyu Yangju Hui (Ed.), *Tongsu Jiaoyu Congkan* (Vol. 15, pp. 119-120).
- Wang, F. S. (2011). The impact of the linear model of history on modern Chinese historiography. In B. Moloughney & P. Zarrow (Eds.), *Transforming history: The making of a modern academic discipline in twentieth-century China* (pp. 135-168). The Chinese University of Hong Kong. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1p6qqp7.9>
- Washburn-Freund, F. (1924). The evolution of Reinhardt. In O. M. Saylor (Ed.), *Max Reinhardt and his theatre* (pp. 44-56). Brentano's.
- Weyant, G. W. (1965). *A critical study of Brander Matthews' dramatic theory* (Publication No. 6507243) [Doctoral dissertation, University of Southern California]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Xue, D. J. (1981). Stage design for Brecht's *Life of Galileo*. In A. Tatlow & T. W. Wong (Eds.), *Brecht and east Asian theatre: The proceedings of a conference on Brecht in east Asian theatre* (pp. 72-87). Hing Yip Printing.
- Yan, Z., & Rong, Z. (1983). Yu Shangyuan nianbiao [Chronology of Yu Shangyuan]. *Xiju Yishu Ziliao*, 8, 63-78.
- Yu, S. Y. (1921, December 5). Nügaoshi Bolian de paiyan he nannü heyan wenti [Peking Normal College for Women's stage of *The Neckless* and the problem of mixed-gender performance]. *Chenbao Fukan*, C3.
- Yu, S. Y. (1922a, June 25). Zuoxi de yuanli daoyan [Preface to *The principles of playmaking*]. *Chenbao Fukan*, C3.
- Yu, S. Y. (1922b, August 16). Yiwan Zuoxi de yuanli qipian yihou [After translating

- the seven chapters in The principles of playmaking]. *Chenbao Fukan*, C2.
- Yu, S. Y. (1922c, August 19). Guoqu ershier xiju mingjia ji qi daibiaozuo daoyan [Preface to The past twenty-two great playwrights and their masterpieces]. *Chenbao Fukan*, C2.
- Yu, S. Y. (1922d, August 25). Buluoteshi yu Qiufan [Plautus and The Captives]. *Chenbao Fukan*, C1-C2.
- Yu, S. Y. (1922e, September 1). Gongerna yu Xide [Corneille and Cid]. *Chenbao Fukan*, C1-C2.
- Yu, S. Y. (1922f, September 11). Heerbaoge yu Mengtang nasi [Holberg and Rasmus Montanus]. *Chenbao Fukan*, C1-C2.
- Yu, S. Y. (1922g, October 9). Aisijileshi yu Yagemennong [Aeschylus and Agamemnon]. *Chenbao Fukan*, C2-C3.
- Yu, S. Y. (1922h, October 12). Shafukeli yu Yidiposiwang [Sophocles and Oedipus The King]. *Chenbao Fukan*, C3.
- Yu, S. Y. (1923a). Qinghua xuesheng yu yinshi nannü [Tshinghua students and eat drink men woman]. *Qinghua Zhoukan: Wenyi Zengkang*, Commemorative Issue, 171-175.
- Yu, S. Y. (1923b). Xieshiju de kunnan [The difficulties of realistic drama]. *Qinghua Zhoukan: Wenyi Zengkang*, 4, 19-21.
- Yu, S. Y. (1923c, February 1). Geyueju cishi you tichang de biyao me? [Is it necessary to promote opera now?] *Chenbao Fukan*, C2-C3.
- Yu, S. Y. (1923d, July 1). Hongye [The Red Leaf]. *Shishi Xinbao Wenxue Xunkan*.
- Yu, S. Y. (1923e, November 22). Qinxian 1: Zheyici likai zuguo [A humble gift 1: Leaving the motherland this time]. *Chenbao Fukan*, C4.
- Yu, S. Y. (1927a). Du Gaosiwosui de Gongdao [Reading Galsworthy's Justice]. In S. Y. Yu (Ed.), *Xiju lunji* (pp. 89-108). Beixin Bookstore.
- Yu, S. Y. (1927b). Jieshao Xiaobona jinzuochangshou pian [Introducing Bernard

- Shaw's recent work *Back to Methuselah*]. In S. Y. Yu (Ed.), *Xiju lunji* (pp. 57-88). Beixin Bookstore.
- Yu, S. Y. (1927c). Luosidan jiqi jiezu Xilanna [Rostand and his masterpiece *Cyrano de Bergerac*]. In S. Y. Yu (Ed.), *Xiju lunji* (pp. 109-136). Beixin Bookstore.
- Zhang, T. S. (2016). Tongyuan yiliu: gudai Zhongguo xiaoshuo he xiqu de Yindu shourong – Yi xiezi-zhengwen jiegou wei gean de kaochao [The acceptance of Indian culture as the same source by ancient Chinese opera and novel: A case study of the wedge-text structure]. *Zhongguo Bijiao Wenxue*, 1, 84-96.
- Zhang, Y. K. (1920). Wenxue yu xiju [Literature and drama]. *Dongfang Zazhi*, 17(17), 64-70.
- Zheng, Z. D. (1996). *Zhongguo suwenxue shi* [History of Chinese popular literature]. Beijing Eastern Publishing House.