

**COSMOPOLITANISM AT WAR:
A STUDY OF XU XU'S DRAMA SCRIPTS, 1939-1944**

by

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Abstract

Circumstances in China during WWII were changing constantly in areas controlled by different political powers. People traveling between the Japanese-occupied area and the Greater Rear Area controlled by the Nationalists encountered different political and cultural climates, each with both limitations and opportunities for the circulation of knowledge, information, and literature. This thesis examines how one playwright with cosmopolitan sensibilities responded to these different conditions. Specifically, I analyze the multi-act plays that Xu Xu wrote between 1938 to 1944 in two locales: Japanese-occupied Shanghai and the Nationalists' wartime headquarters of Chongqing. I examine how war affected Xu Xu's drama aesthetics, focusing in particular on how he rewrote several of his Shanghai plays after he moved to Chongqing. I argue that Xu Xu's multi-act plays, with their mixture of melodrama and innovation, reveal challenges with maintaining a cosmopolitan self-identity during wartime. Xu Xu, I argue, did not find a satisfactory space to write freely. In his wartime plays he propagandized for his own cosmopolitan vision, trying to thread together obligatory patriotism and aesthetic self-fulfillment. In his experience we see a Chinese intellectual self-adjusting his literary aesthetics when entering a new geo-political space, while insisting on the primacy of individual moral vision.

Preface

This thesis is an original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Jiaqi Yao.

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1 Introduction

In the mid-1970s, the Hong Kong literary critic Lau Shiu-ming 劉紹銘 (1934-) wrote down his impressions of Xu Xu 徐訏 (aka Hsu Yu, 1908-80). Lau had just translated C.T. Hsia's (1921-2013) canon-making work *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction* into Chinese, and he recalled Xu Xu asking him why Hsia hadn't mentioned him in the book. "The atmosphere [at that moment] was of course awkward, very awkward." Lau wrote. He remembered being struck by Xu Xu's slender and melancholy face, which seemed somehow familiar. After the meeting, he realized that Xu Xu's face was identical to an image he'd seen of Don Quixote, "the Knight of Sorrowful Countenance."¹

The description rings true. Xu Xu appears in many photographs as a solemn and pensive gentleman: his suit immaculate, his eyes serene, and his mouth always tightly compressed. His facial expression implies a rigid personality, as well as loneliness. Xu lived most of his life as an outsider, and these experiences endowed him not only with a unique literary vision that led to a long and successful writing career, but one marked by personal and ideological struggles.

Hsia explained in the 1970s that he didn't like Xu Xu's early works: "My personal opinions may have done him an injustice, since there may be occasional good pieces among his later works. But if a writer can't provide a fresh and serious first impression,

¹ Lau Shiu-ming, "The Knight of Sorrowful Countenance," *Pingguo ribao* (Apple Daily), November 10, 2013, sec. Supplement: Guozi. Accessed February 28, 2016. <http://hk.apple.nextmedia.com/supplement/apple/art/20131110/18500743>.

this is his own fault. He can't blame others."²

Yet some of Hsia's and Lau's contemporaries in Hong Kong and overseas held a high opinion of Xu Xu's works. Lin Yutang 林語堂 (1895-1976), one of Xu Xu's best friends, for instance, praised Xu's works in his 1961 speech delivered in the Library of Congress: "Of the writers of short stories. Lusin [Lu Xun], Shen Tsungwen [Shen Congwen], Feng Wenping (less known), and Shü Yü [Xu Xu] are the best."³ The Hong Kong based critic Sima Changfeng (1920-80) in his 1976 *A New History of Chinese Literature* 中國新文學史 speaks highly of Xu Xu's writing in a variety of genres.⁴ And Xu Xu had long since established himself as a storyteller with mass appeal: in the 1950s, his works were adapted into more than ten films by major studios such as the Shaw Brothers, MP&GI and Hsin Hwa Motion Pictures. In the 1960s and 1970s, Xu Xu published his own complete works in Taiwan. Despite Hsia's low opinion, Xu Xu was a writer of major influence in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Southeast Asia—success that built upon his earlier career in mainland China.

Xu Xu has been overlooked by literary critics before and since Hsia's influential study. After 1949, Xu Xu gradually lost his position in mainland literary circles, as his

² Chih-tsing Hsia, "Xia Zhiqing shu jian" (Letters from Chih-tsing Hsia), *Shuping shumu* (Literary Critic and Catalogue), no. 28 (1975): 18.

³ Lin Yutang, *The Pleasures of a Nonconformist* (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1962), 313. In the speech, he also praises Xu Xu's poems' "instinct with rhythm, [which] come naturally." *Ibid*, 308.

⁴ Sima Changfeng, *Zhongguo xin wenxueshi* (New History of Chinese Literature), vol. 2 (Hong Kong: Chiu Ming Publishing Co. Ltd., 1978), 93.

works were banned. In 1990s, some mainland Chinese scholars started to pay attention to his works of popular romance. In 1993, Wu Yiqin 吳義勤 published the first monograph on Xu Xu in mainland China. Wu's *A Wandering Spirit in the Metropolis* 漂泊的都市之魂 (1993) gave a comprehensive introduction to Xu Xu's literary works, framed by a general trajectory of Xu Xu's life experience, arguing that Xu's general inclinations were romantic and poetic.

Wu Fuhui 吳福輝 (1995), in contrast, dubbed Xu Xu a "writer of Shanghai school at a later stage with modernist inclinations."⁵ Wu singles out Xu Xu's novel *The Rustling Wind* 風蕭蕭 (1943) as the work that "raised the modernity of the Shanghai school to an unprecedented level."⁶ *Thirty Years of Chinese Modern Literature* 中國現代文學三十年 (2005), coedited by Wu Fuhui, Qian Lique 錢理群 and Wen Rumin 溫儒敏, identifies Xu Xu as a representative of a "new Shanghai school" 新海派 and a "neo-romantic" 後期浪漫主義 popular writer, who introduced "refined 雅" literature into "vulgar 俗" literature.⁷

In 2008, Shanghai Joint Publishing Company 上海三聯書店 published a 16-volume anthology of *Collected Works of Xu Xu* 徐訏文集 to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Xu Xu's birth. The event testifies to Xu Xu's growing posthumous stature in Chinese modern literary history. Critics have reaffirmed that Xu Xu possessed a unique

⁵ Wu Fuhui, *Dushi xuanliu zhong de haipai xiaoshuo* (Fictions of Shanghai School in the Maelstrom of the Cosmopolis) (Changsha: Hunan jiaoyu chubanshe, 1995), 202.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Qian Lique, Wen Rumin, and Wu Fuhui, *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue sanshi nian* (Thirty Years of Chinese Modern Literature) (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2005), 398.

artistic style, which Wu Yiqing, in the anniversary anthology, summarized as follows: Firstly, Xu Xu's works are entertaining and artistic rather than utilitarian. Second, Xu's style features romantic affections and human characters based on a realistic depiction of society and life experience. Third, Xu Xu's literary works transcend the "refined" vs. "vulgar" binary. Wu implies the political hierarchy of mainland vs. Hong Kong and Taiwan in the literary history written in mainland China and asserts that Xu Xu's constant travel and writing longevity is a unique reference for the continuity and the rupture of the narrative of Chinese literature.

The first major North American study of Xu Xu's oeuvre is Frederik Green's 2009 doctoral dissertation. Green argues that Xu Xu's works revived traditional Chinese narratives to appreciate European literary techniques and aesthetics, as well as interpret his philosophical thoughts and nostalgia within a romantic worldview. These works "constitute a highly original response to modernity."⁸ Xu Xu's life-long trajectory, he argues, connects the modernism of the Republican era and later literary developments in post-war Hong Kong and other Sinophone regions.

All these scholars emphasize Xu Xu's achievement in fiction and essays. Yet Xu Xu was also a prolific poet and playwright. He wrote total approximately ten million words, including forty drama scripts, as well as essays about dramatic theory. Though

⁸ Frederik H. Green, "A Chinese Romantic's Journey through Time and Space: Cosmopolitanism, Nationalism and Nostalgia in the Work of Xu Xu (1908 - 1980)" (Ph.D., Yale University, 2009), 10.

scholars such as Wu Yiqin and Frederik Green make occasional comments about Xu Xu's plays, drama scripts are not the major focus of their research.

In this thesis, I focus on the multi-act plays Xu Xu wrote during the Anti-Japanese War, between 1938 to 1944, and argue that Xu used these plays to promote a personal aesthetic vision and to respond to the mainstream political imperative of patriotism. Xu Xu grew up around the time of the May Fourth Movement (1919) and experienced the wartime chaos in both semi-occupied Shanghai and the Kuomintang (KMT) controlled hinterland. His editorial work, his creative works, and his popular success during this period are the product of a complicated environment and Xu's own pursuit of his own literary vision. Xu Xu became familiar with drama in college and identified as a playwright. His plays help readers to understand Xu Xu's writing career from its inception.

Xu Xu's plays have nevertheless been generally overlooked by scholars of "spoken drama" 話劇 (as opposed to theatre that included singing). In 1989, Chen Baichen 陳白塵 (1908-94) and Dong Jian mention Xu Xu in *A Draft History of Chinese Modern Drama* 中國現代戲劇史稿 (2008) as a "versatile and prolific modern writer."⁹ While affirming Xu Xu's combination of romantic and lyrical narrative with philosophy in his plays, they claim that his drama scripts lack the power of criticizing the reality with

⁹ Dong Jian, ed., *Zhongguo xiandai xiju shigao, 1899-1949* (Draft History of Chinese Modern Drama) (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 2008), 249.

an optimistic attitude towards the life.¹⁰ In 1990s, a new generation of scholars, including Zhang Jian 張健 and Pan Jian 盤劍, paid greater attention to the scholarly nature and artistic style of Xu Xu's drama scripts.¹¹ Though they identify some crucial themes—such as love philosophy and futurism—in Xu Xu's plays, their critiques neglect Xu Xu's theories of drama and the context of authorship. My study is the first to analyze Xu Xu's theories and dramatic works in historical context.

Spoken drama has been one of the important genres for political propaganda in modern China. In *Twentieth-Century Chinese Drama: An Anthology* (1983), Edward Gunn contends: "Given its inherently public nature and the social views of the writers, spoken drama has been the most assertive form of innovative literature in modern Chinese society."¹² Chinese spoken drama playwrights of the Republican era often saw it as their duty to inculcate nationalism in their audiences. Xu Xu's plays are an exception to this rule. Xu Xu was a multi-genre writer, and his playscripts are not merely simple realistic stories and presentations, but a multifaceted space in which he presents his philosophical interests as well as sincere concerns about the reality.

¹⁰ Ibid., 249–50.

¹¹ See Zhang Jian, "Xu Xu xijulun" (On Xu Xu's Comdies), *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue yanjiu congkan* (Chinese Modern Literature Studies), no. 4 (1998): 92–105; Zhang Jian, *Zhongguo xiandai xiju lungao* (Draft History of Chinese Modern Comdies) (Beijing: China Renmin University Press, 2015); Pan Jian, "Xuezhe zhi ju: Xu Xu xiju chuangzuo de dute fengge" (Scholar's Drama: Xu Xu's Distinctive Style of Drama Writing), *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue yanjiu congkan* (Modern Chinese Literature Studies), no. 2 (1993): 70–84.

¹² Edward Gunn, ed., *Twentieth-Century Chinese Drama: An Anthology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), vii.

The multi-act plays Xu wrote during Sino-Japanese war period were not the most popular dramatic works during the time, partly because their ethos clashed with prevailing war ethics. They express an ethos of liberal cosmopolitanism and uphold aesthetic appreciation as a virtue in itself. "Liberal cosmopolitanism," a disposition that gained followers in Shanghai during 1930s, is an ideological outlook that diverges from patriotic and propagandist indications and focuses more on the practice of modern life. Literary works in this vein concern themselves more with individuals than the nation-state. As an editor for the "Analects group," affiliated with the 1930s journal *The Analects Fortnightly*, Xu Xu responded to this fashion. His wartime writings enlarge the discursive space of Chinese spoken drama from a dominant context of national salvation and a realistic style to a liberal expression of the nation and the world in danger.

Xu Xu's case also reveals an alternative trajectory of a Shanghai-based liberal intellectual in wartime China. Xu Xu, unlike contemporaries such as Zhang Ailing 張愛玲 (1920-95) or Shao Xunmei 邵洵美 (1906-68) who stayed in Shanghai during the war, stepped out of his geographical comfort zone and moved to Chongqing. His drama scripts from this period reveal tension between independent expression and nationalistic literary imperative in two different spaces during the anti-Japanese war. While Xu Xu attracted many readers and achieved commercial success in Shanghai, his subsequent efforts to revise his playscripts so as to craft a patriotic narrative for a larger audience seem awkward. I trace his experience in revising his plays, which reveal a certain

fragility of an independent professional writer from Shanghai trying to reconcile with the mainstream literary narrative in the hinterland. In analyzing Xu Xu's self-revision of his plays, I show a cosmopolitan individual confronting the strong nationalistic trend across vast geographical and political spaces in a nationalistic sensitive period in China. What, I ask, do Xu Xu's activities in the drama field tell us about a versatile liberal writer's efforts to survive World War II?

The following chapters concentrate on nine multi-act plays Xu Xu wrote during 1939 to 1944 in Shanghai and Chongqing. Chapter 2 traces Xu Xu's path to becoming a liberal cosmopolitan writer and analyzes the play *An Effective Military Weapon* 軍事利器 (1939) to show how Xu Xu tried to promote cosmopolitanism, by expressing concern for impending war from a transnational perspective, and in the form of a drama script that would be appealing to a popular readership. In chapter 3, I show how Xu Xu put his dramatic and aesthetic theories into practice in three plays: *Life and Death* 生與死 (1939), *Mother's Portrait* 母親的肖像 (1941) and the verse drama 詩劇 *When the Tides Come* 潮來的時候 (1940). Underlying all three plays, I argue, is a metaphysical argument that human beings must acknowledge the necessity of love, develop a personal ethos and reconcile with the imperative of nationalism. In chapter 4, I look at how Xu Xu's playwriting changes after he moved to the hinterland in 1942, analyzing the plays *The Moon* 月亮 (1939), *The Death of He Luofu* 何洛甫之死 (1941) and their revised versions, respectively: *Moonlight Sonata* 月光曲 (1941), *Moonlight over the Huangpu*

River 黃浦江頭的夜月 (1944) and *Brothers* 兄弟 (1944). Xu Xu revised these plays as a direct result of his migration, and I view the revisions as a strategy for survival in the KMT-controlled area, where Xu Xu needed to adjust himself into a brand new political and literary hierarchy and patriotic agenda drastically different from the occupied Shanghai.

Xu Xu's drama scripts tell stories about resistance and confusion in the post-May Fourth society. His depiction of modern families and the younger generations, I argue, express a liberal cosmopolitan ethos. He also challenges the Chinese theatrical mainstream by emphasizing aesthetics above all, and writing plays to be read (in periodicals) rather than performed. Attention to individual aesthetic experience characterizes his writing, which also exposes the incongruity between his works and the possible performance on the stage. Finally, his migration from occupied Shanghai to Chongqing raises the question of the definition of freedom in wartime China. As a liberal cosmopolitan playwright, Xu Xu could hardly find a satisfactory space to write freely. His wartime dramas, propagandizing for his own purpose, find a narrow way between the patriotic needs and commercial success. Thus, I argue, as an essential part of Chinese literary history, Xu Xu's dramas contribute to an alternative aesthetic expression of individuals' survival and a literary negotiation with the political pressure in war.

2 From Student to Writer: A Brief Biography of Xu Xu, 1923-1938

2.1 College and Drama Societies, 1927-33

Xu Xu was born in 1908 into a wealthy family in Cixi, Zhejiang Province. His father Xu Tao 徐韜 (1887-1955), whose art name is Hejun 荷君, was a former *juren* 举人 and an official in the Finance Department of the Beiyang government and the Central Bank of the Republic of China.¹³ Xu Xu moved to Shanghai with his father in the age of eleven. After years of study in Shanghai and then Beijing, Xu Xu enrolled in Peking University in 1927 to study philosophy; he finished that degree in 1931 and, that same year, continued in another undergraduate major in psychology for another year and a half.

This famous university inculcated him with knowledge of philosophy from Kant to Freud, as well as a passion for popular ideology and literary creation. Human nature later became a dominant topic in his writing. He also read and was inspired by works of Marxism, though in France years later he abandoned it. During 1920s to 1930s, professors such as Li Dazhao 李大釗 (1889-1927), Chen Duxiu 陳獨秀 (1879-1942) and Tao Xisheng 陶希聖 (1899-1988), established Marxism-related studies and courses in Peking University. Xu Xu recalled in 1957 that Marxism gained popularity among students: "Because I was at the age of fervent curiosity, every time when new books [related to Marxism] were published, I would borrow or buy them, and read through them

¹³ Zhang Yongjiu, "Yunti tong wang tiantang" (Cloudy Stairs to Heaven), *Changjian wenyi* (Yangzi Literature), no. 11 (2015): 142.

from the very beginning."¹⁴ Scholar Chen Xuanbo points out that Xu Xu read widely from Marx, Engels, and Lenin, to Trotsky and Kawakami Hajime.¹⁵

Meanwhile, he devoted himself into drama practice, inspired by Western aesthetic theories. Before writing drama scripts for school drama society, he audited a course in dramatic criticism in the English department.¹⁶ Xu Xu's devotion to spoken drama thus originated not in appreciation of performance, but in his enthusiasm for studying literary theories.

Xu Xu became a pivotal member of the school drama society, writing several plays for performance. Many of these plays focus on social and political conflicts. *Dispute* 纠纷 (1930), for instance, presents the conflict between lower-class peasants and workers with the authorities in power. The doctor in the play hesitates to save the chief police who was severely injured in the course of suppressing workers. In the end, the doctor chooses to violate a central tenant of his profession and poison this cruel and heartless man.

Xu Xu quickly responded to news of the 1931 Mukden Incident by writing the one-act play *Banner* 旗 (1931). Knowing that his bank has been robbed, his eldest son killed and the Northeastern Army retreated after the Mukden Incident, the banker Wang

¹⁴ Dongfang Jibai, *Huidao geren zhuyi yu ziyou zhuyi* (Returning to Individualism and Liberalism) (Hong Kong: Youlian shubao faxing gongsi, 1957), 12.

¹⁵ Chen Xuanbo, *Shi yu guang: 20 shiji Zhongguo wenxueshi geju zhong de Xu Xu* (Time and Light: Xu Xu in Chinese Literary History of 20th Century) (Nanchang: Baihua zhou wenyi chubanshe, 2004), 26.

¹⁶ Xu Xu, "Cong *Yueliang* chansheng tan qi" (On the Production of *Moon* and other matters), *Wen Wei Po*, April 7, 1939, sec. 11.

Zhengguang and his family still sacrifice themselves to protect the national flag, not heeding his friends' advice to retreat. This patriotic play criticizes Chiang Kai-shek's non-resistance policy and praises patriotic self-sacrifice. The play was well received when it was performed at Beiping Kaiming theatre in 1933,¹⁷ and the success encouraged Xu Xu to devote himself to spoken drama.¹⁸

Xu Xu's anxiety about the national crisis is conspicuous in those early works. His heroes empathize with victims and resist the evil. However, *Dispute* and *Banner* reveals clearly that Xu Xu inclines toward portraying the middle class and entrepreneurs. Poor people appear in a relatively minor position in the plays. In Marxist terms, Xu Xu, in participating in patriotic discourse presented the subjectivity of intellectuals and propertied class rather than the proletariat. His "intellectual's bourgeoisie ideology"¹⁹ sometimes upset him when it tended to question Marxism, since "one will be considered as outdated if he or she doesn't believe in Marxism."²⁰

In 1930, Xu Xu and several arts students from other schools organized the Time and Space Society 時空社 and staged famous plays such as Moliere's *The Miser* and Anatole France's *The Man Who Married a Dumb Wife* in several cities. Xu Xu acted in a major role in *The Miser* and was well received by the audience. According to a

¹⁷ Yu Congyu, "Qi" (Flag), *Tian, di, ren* (Heaven, Earth and Man), no. 7 (1936): 33. Yu Congyu 余從予 is the pen name Xu Xu used in this magazine.

¹⁸ Xu Xu, "Nian ren yi shi" (Memory of People and Events), *Ming Pao Monthly*, no. 43 (July 1969): 79.

¹⁹ Dongfang, *Huidao geren zhuyi yu ziyou zhuyi*, 12.

²⁰ Ibid.

pseudonymous critic "Historian Qu" 瞿史公, though audience liked the performance, the attendance was not satisfied. The Time and Space Society soon disbanded due to lack of financial resources and tepid audience support.²¹

Besides performing and writing plays in drama societies, Xu Xu also submitted drama scripts to magazines in Shanghai. Early in 1932, his one-act play script "One Star in the Bottom of the Heart" 心底的一星, first performed by a drama society at the auditorium of Tsinghua University in Beijing, was published in *Shen Bao Monthly* 申報月刊.²² Another play, "Participation" 參加, staged at Peking University, was published in *New Age* 新世代 in 1933.²³ These two plays were marked as "performed" at the end of the scripts, to which Xu Xu attached short comments about the actors' performance. "Two actresses took their responsibilities seriously," he says of "One Star in the Bottom of the Heart".²⁴ As for "Participation", he criticizes the debut performance: "the effect was not even good as a later high school production."²⁵

In addition to these performed plays, he also published several that were not staged. One of his earliest magazine publications is the one-act play "Empty Regrets" 難填的遺憾, a monologue of "someone" making a plea for forgiveness to his bride outside the door. In the end the protagonist finds his wife's suicide note and faints on the stage.

²¹ Qu Shigong, "Ju tai wai shi" (Unofficial History of the Stage), *Shen Bao*, February 6, 1939.

²² Xu Xu, "Xindi de yixing" (One Star in the Bottom of the Heart), *Shen Bao yuekan* (Shen Bao Monthly) 1, no. 4 (1932): 129–33.

²³ Xu Xu, "Canjia" (Participation), *Xin shidai* (New Age) 4, no. 2 (1933): 91–99.

²⁴ Xu, "Xindi de yixing," 133.

²⁵ Xu, "Canjia," 94.

The script was published in the famous *Eastern Miscellany* 東方雜誌 in 1933 in the column of "literature and art" 文藝.²⁶ This three-page play challenges actors' professional performance techniques to present proper emotion for each paragraph, which could be difficult for schools' amateur groups. However, with an O. Henry ending, this short script makes for a pithy and entertaining read.

Xu's publishing success inspired him to continue writing plays. From 1930 to 1933, during his most productive playwriting period,²⁷ Xu Xu wrote nineteen scripts, published either in magazines or in later collections. Apparently, Xu Xu's dominant literary preference at the time was spoken drama, yet the failure of his drama society followed by the successful publication of his drama scripts apparently convinced Xu Xu that magazines offered a more approachable channel to complete his dream as a playwright.

2.2 The Making of a Liberal Cosmopolitan, 1933-37

In 1933, Lin Yutang invited Xu Xu, a frequent contributor to *The Analects Fortnightly* 論語半月刊 (1932-37, 1946-49), to join the magazine as an editor.²⁸ Xu Xu abandoned his studies in the Peking University psychology department in the summer and began a new

²⁶ Xu Xu, "Nan tian de quehan" (Empty Regrets), *Dongfang zazhi* (The Eastern Miscellany) 30, no. 24 (1933): 12-14.

²⁷ Wu Yiqin and Wang Suxia, *Woxin panghuang: Xu Xu zhuan* (My Heart is Wandering: A Biography of Xu Xu) (Shanghai: Shanghai sanlian shudian, 2008), 55-56.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 58.

career as a full-time editor and writer for the Analects group. He joined *The Analects* as an editor and contributor in 1933. Later he co-edited *This Human World* 人間世 (1934-1935) and *Heaven, Earth and Man* 天地人 (1936).

The Analects group was a loose circle centered around Lin Yutang and his Shanghai-based friends and other “English-language-educated intellectuals.”²⁹ The English-language magazines *The China Critic* (1928-40, 1945), *T'ien Hsia Monthly* 天下月刊 (1935-41), as well as Chinese-language magazines like *The Analects Fortnightly*, and *Cosmic Wind* 宇宙風 (1935-47) were well-known periodicals related to the group and gathering a stable group of contributors to write on similar themes. Xu Xu's professional career in Shanghai endowed him opportunities to make acquaintance with Shanghai literati such as Tao Kangde 陶亢德 (1908-83), Shao Xunmei, Huang Jiayin 黃嘉音 (1913-61), Huang Jiade 黃嘉德 (1908-92) and Cao Junren 曹聚仁 (1900-72). Friends and celebrities in this circle helped him to publish his articles and books. Xu Xu's four-year experience in this Shanghai literary circle influenced his writing aesthetics and literary philosophy. Communications with his friends and colleagues in the Analects group introduced Xu Xu to a perspective that reshaped his "bourgeois" writing: liberal cosmopolitanism.

The cosmopolis of Republican Shanghai helped to shape this brand of Chinese cosmopolitanism. Shanghai was long known as the Paris of the East, a place of unique

²⁹ Michel Hockx and Kirk A. Denton, *Literary Societies of Republican China* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008), 210.

cultural hybridity thanks to its ambiguous status as a semi-colonized region and a modern, global city.³⁰ Under the influence of both Chinese sovereignty in the inner city and colonial ideology in Settlements, the city embraced an open culture towards both Western modernity and Chinese local culture. Shanghai grew cosmopolitan in the early 20th century through the transaction of various cultures, life attitudes and identities.

Liberal cosmopolitanism was a concept invoked by a group of writers who lived in Shanghai and kept their own literary doctrine. In 1930, the editors of the magazine *The China Critic*, for which Lin Yutang preform was a contributing editor, published the proposal for a Liberal Cosmopolitan Club which would:

be exclusive in the sense of having for its members only such people as have the liberal cosmopolitan mind, people who are more interested in the examination of ideas than in national glorification, more in the common problems of modern life than in any patriotic propaganda.³¹

These writers, considering themselves more as citizens of the world, "promoted individualism over blind nationalism."³² Modernity, to them, was superior to nationality. Writing in a second language could be seen as a pioneer behavior in China to break the limitation of boundary, territory and the Chinese nationalism. As Rebecca Walkowitz argues in *Cosmopolitan Style* (2006), the theories of cosmopolitanism are based on "a

³⁰ See Yue Meng, *Shanghai and the Edges of Empires* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), xi–xii.

³¹ "Proposal for a Liberal Cosmopolitan Club in Shanghai," *The China Critic*, November 13, 1930, 1086.

³² Christopher G Rea, "Introduction," in *China's Literary Cosmopolitans: Qian Zhongshu, Yang Jiang, and the World of Letters*, ed. Christopher G Rea (Leiden: BRILL, 2015), 6.

philosophical tradition that promotes allegiance to a transnational or global community, emphasizing detachment from local cultures and the interests of the nation."³³

Though Xu Xu did not write for *The China Critic*, a sister publication of *The Analects*, he was deeply influenced by Lin Yutang's editorial and literary vision. While introducing the concept of "liberal cosmopolitanism" into Chinese context, the editors switch the attention on transnationalism to a liberal literary preference. In 1933, *The Analects Fortnightly* declared its own commitment to liberal politics. Editors of the magazine do not want to fall in the writing conventions of social criticism and national salvation. Their ethos would be humor, which requires a fresh perspective without suffering and patriotic propaganda.³⁴ As Xu Xu recalled, *The Analects* offered a true literary popularization of liberal expression connected to daily life:

The Analects neither promoted recondite literature nor espoused about grand theories about patriotism and national salvation. It was humanistic, vibrant, and realistic. . . . And its language was always simple, neat and plain. It was neither exaggerated like oratory, nor tainted by Europeanization or the bellicosity of a slogan.

論語並不提倡高深的文學，也不談愛國救民的大道理，它是人生的、生活的、現實的，……而文字一般都是簡樸乾淨平實，不誇張如演說，不渲染為歐化，不呼喊成口號。³⁵

One of the commandments in the first issue of the magazine declares: "We do not

³³ Rebecca L. Walkowitz, *Cosmopolitan Style: Modernism beyond the Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 9.

³⁴ "Women de taidu" (Out Attitude), *Lunyü* (The Analects), no. 3 (1932): 85.

³⁵ Xu Xu, *Xiandai zhongguo wenxue guoyanlu* (Book of the Passing Chinese Modern Literature) (Taipei: Shibao Wenhua Chuban Qiye Youxian Gongsi, 1991), 85.

propagandize for money; but we may propagandize or even counterpropagandize for love."³⁶ Obeying the rules, Xu Xu and the *Analects* group presented their interests more in a liberal articulation of daily amusement and topics other than editorials about national affairs.

However, Chinese identity and national awareness always cast shadow over liberal and cosmopolitan concerns in those magazines. Though *The China Critic* and *The Analects* opposed propaganda and avoided political topics, writers still asserted a distinct Chinese identity, which became the foundation for patriotism in the war period. As Shuang Shen suggests, this cosmopolitanism was not in opposition to nationalism. Of *The China Critic* she notes "that self-equally emphatic statement that this magazine was the first Chinese-edited English periodical [...] appeared in almost every advertisement for this magazine."³⁷ Leo Ou-fan Lee locates these Shanghai-based cosmopolitan writers in his *Shanghai Modern* (1999) as "a cultural mediator" embraces the Western culture openly with their unquestioned Chinese identity" at the intersection between China and other parts of the world."³⁸

The persistence of Chinese identity and a sense of national awareness of the

³⁶ T.K.Chuan translates the full passage in "The Little Critic: Introducing 'The Analects'" *The China Critic* 5, no. 49 (8 December 1932): 1303. Quote from Christopher G Rea, *The Age of Irreverence: A New History of Laughter in China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015), 138.

³⁷ Shuang Shen, *Cosmopolitan Publics: Anglophone Print Culture in Semi-Colonial Shanghai* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2009), 23.

³⁸ Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Shanghai Modern: The Flowering of a New Urban Culture in China, 1930-1945* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), 312–15.

Analects group revealed itself through literary style. Though cosmopolitan literati usually commanded good foreign languages and translation skills, they are required to develop an authentic Chinese style writing rather than intimate Western style in terms of grammars and vocabulary usage. Xu Xu remembered an author named Lini 麗尼, who submitted many articles to *This Human World*, used an European linguistic style to write Chinese essays. Every time Xu Xu included an article by Lini for publication the magazine, Lin Yutang cut it, since Lin didn't consider the style Chinese. Xu Xu quotes Lin Yutang's 1966 argument:

Generally speaking, someone making an argument who can't deliver it accurately enough in Chinese will turn to Westernized grammar. But this will only result in vernacular Chinese that is so incomprehensible or bizarre that it resembles neither the National Language nor any Western language. This is the behavior of a self-abasing member of a weak nationality. It's not the way [the citizen of] a great nation ought to behave.

大概立論的人，說國語不夠精確，所以要學西洋文法，但是這樣下去，必有比這三不像的白話還怪的白話出現，弄到國語不成國語，洋話不成洋話，這是弱小民族自卑自侮者之行為，不是大國之風。³⁹

Lin Yutang, in other words, prefers an authentic Chinese vernacular writing style to a fusion with Western style, which he sees as an expression of a nationalistic inferiority complex. As a representative of a Shanghai elites' liberal cosmopolitanism, Lin's complaint explicitly opposes another radical Chinese cosmopolitanism among Shanghai

³⁹ Xu Xu, *Nian ren yi shi: Xu Xu yiwen xuan* (Memory of People and Events: Anthology of Xu Xu's Uncollected Works), ed. Ping-kwan Leung (Hong Kong: The Centre for Humanities Research of Lingnan University, 2003), 77.

bourgeoisie, which as Madeleine Yue Dong calls "a hierarchical international order that centralized Western values and provincialized the non-West."⁴⁰ Lin's affirmation of Chinese writing style and its relationship to nationalism affects the criteria of article selections in magazines of the Analects group, as well as Xu Xu's literary ethos and standard for writing.

To conclude, the Analects group insisted on both liberal cosmopolitanism and a Chinese identity defined on their own terms. A cosmopolitan writer should not restrict oneself in the ordinary expression of propaganda or nationalistic criticism. Xu Xu, influenced by these values, explored drama as an artistic device to discuss abstract humanistic themes. His "futuristic plays" 擬未來派戲劇—"Female History" 女性史 (1933), "Human History" 人類史 (1935), "Ghost Play" 鬼戲 (1935)—are representative of these initial artistic experiments.

The short three-act "Human History" presents scenes occurring in distant past, near past and near future, which present corresponding relationships between master and slaves, master and servants, workers and factory. In acts one and two, slaves and servants can only eat when their master allows them to do so. In act three, similarly, workers could only have their dinner after the siren sounds. This three-page script presents an abstract but insightful criticism of capitalism, and predicts a pessimistic future in which machines

⁴⁰ Madeleine Yue Dong, "Shanghai's China Traveler," in *Everyday Modernity in China*, ed. Madeleine Yue Dong and Joshua Goldstein (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006), 198.

rule human beings.

In 1936, Xu Xu gained an opportunity to study philosophy in Louvain and Paris. During these studies, he travelled through the European countries and wrote down his observations of Western culture. His travel essays became popular in Shanghai magazines, gaining him a reputation. Frederik Green contends that this period was crucial for Xu Xu to develop his own literary sensibility. During the period, he established a column "Sentiments from Abroad" 海外的情調, in *West Wind Monthly* 西風. Though he did not write any drama scripts during his sojourn, the experience broadened Xu Xu's perspective, and help him confirm his unique fictional themes that place Chinese in a cosmopolitan context.

In Paris, Xu Xu gave up the Marxism after reading a French report of Stalin's criticism of Trotsky and André Gide's *Return from the U.S.S.R.* He couldn't understand why those great revolutionary leaders were suddenly pronounced traitor to the country. As Xu Xu expound in 1957, his generation was growing up in the infinite turbulence. The May Fourth movement rejected the traditional ethos without establishing a convincing new ideology for the younger generation. The movement taught the youth to become iconoclasts, not creators. Under the impacts of various "-isms" and thoughts, Marxism was only one of the mainstream choices but not a confirmed belief for Xu Xu.⁴¹ Thus, his interests in Marxism readily disappeared once he learnt the cruel political conspiracy

⁴¹ Dongfang, *Huidao geren zhuyi yu ziyou zhuyi*, 10.

that obliterates lives and humanity. Xu Xu was depressed by Stalin's brutal suppression and dictatorship. "I rejected Communism, then I reversed my opinion of Marxism. First I discarded his materialism and then historical materialism. At that time, I started to like Bergson's philosophy."⁴² Xu Xu had already read Kant and Bergson's books during his college era. Compared to the Marxism Xu Xu learnt, Bergson's philosophy highly values the subjectivity of human or individuals in time and space. As a representative of philosophy of life, Bergson rejected mechanistic view of causality and explored the existential issues of human condition. His exploration on consciousness, perception and intuition inspired Xu Xu's theatrical expression. In his later drama scripts, Xu Xu emphasizes and scrutinizes individuals' inner states through their own introspection when confronting the discussion of destiny. He inclined to depict characters' inner states in detail. As Bergson contends, deep introspection "leads us to grasp our inner states as living things, constantly *becoming*, as states not amenable to measure, which permeate one another and of which the succession in duration has nothing in common with juxtaposition in homogeneous space."⁴³

As a consequence, Xu Xu stopped to echo to Marxism, this popular ideology and political intention. As a liberal writer concerned with individuals' life, he then devoted to more metaphysical and empirical literary space.

⁴² Xu, *Xiandai Zhongguo wenxue guoyanlu*, 380.

⁴³ Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, trans. Frank Lubecki Pogson (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1960), 231.

2.3 A Professional Writer in Wartime Shanghai, 1938-41

Xu Xu was studying in Paris when the war broke out in 1937.

At that time, I soaked in the mood which swung between temporarily staying in France or returning immediately to China. And information from domestic relatives and friends had not been heard for the past three or four months. Where were those who used to live in downtown area stranded? These issues, as well as state of the nation left me burning with anxiety. When a person is pressed by anguished thoughts but can do nothing about them, the emotion flows inward, causing neurosis. Initially, I had occasional insomnia; later I lost sleep almost every night.

就在那個時間，我在暫留與即回的兩端決定不下的心緒中，而國內親友們的音訊，已有三四個月沒有接到。家裡本來是住在市中心的，現在到底是流落在那裡？這些同國事交錯地把我的心擾成灼熱。一個人為種種苦悶所逼，而又不能有什麼行動的時候，這種情緒常常是向內流的，因而影響到生理的神經的失常，起初是偶爾的失眠，後來幾乎夜夜不能安睡起來。

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It was Xu Xu's anxiety about his family that finally caused him to return to China. He then set about transforming his anguish and depression into motivation for literary creation: "Somebody said, literature is the symbol of angst. I drew papers, grasped a pen, and wanted to kill some difficult time and the disturbing state of mind. . . ." ⁴⁵

Back from Paris, Xu Xu lived as a professional writer and then a researcher for a state-owned bank in Shanghai. He started a new column in the supplement of the

⁴⁴ Xu, "Cong *Yueliang* chansheng tan qi"

⁴⁵ Ibid.

Shanghai-based newspaper *Sino-US Daily* 中美日報 and continued to write for the *West Wind Monthly*.⁴⁶

West Wind Monthly, published by the West Wind Society 西風社, was founded by Huang Jiade and his younger brother Huang Jiayin with the financial support from Lin Yutang and Tao Kangde. With the theme of “translating the best of western magazines, and introducing western life and society,” the magazine was popular among young people and urban readers. Before the outbreak of the Pacific War in 1941, *West Wind Monthly* was selling over 20,000 copies per issue.⁴⁷ Contributors included famous writers and intellectuals such as Xie Binying 謝冰瑩 (1906-2000), Lao She, Lin Yutang, and Bi Shutang 畢樹棠 (1900-83). Xu Xu, at the invitation of Huang Jiayin, started to write for the magazine while in Europe for the sake of supporting his family back in Shanghai. By 1938, his articles in the *West Wind* had already won him a devoted following.

Sino-US Daily was funded by the KMT party headquarters. The chief editor Wu Rencang 吳任澹 had close connection with the so-called Central Club Clique, a political faction within KMT, led by Chen Guofu 陳果夫 (1892-1951) and Chen Lifu 陳立夫 (1900-2001).⁴⁸ A Catholic intellectual, Zhang Ruogu 張若谷 (1905-67) was responsible for the supplement "Anthology" 集納.

⁴⁶ Wu Yiqin, *Piaobo de dushi zhi hun: Xu Xu lun* (Wandering Spirit in the Metropolis: A Study of Xu Xu), (Suzhou: Suzhou University Press, 1993), 7.

⁴⁷ Huang Jiade, “Yi Xifeng”, *Chuban shiliao* 1 (1990): 65.

⁴⁸ Yuan Yiqin, “Zhongmei ribao shimo” (A Comprehensive History of the *Sino-US Daily*), *Xinwen yanjiu ziliao* (Materials for Journalist Studies), no. 3 (1989): 151.

The "Anthology" published liberal Shanghai intellectuals who had not escaped to the hinterland.⁴⁹ In this literary supplement, the editors arranged seven cultural lectures every week by different intellectuals. The seven columns are Zhu Haiwan's 朱海萬 "Sunday Arts Talk" 日曜藝話, Zhang Ruogu's "Monday History Talk" 月曜史話, Xu Xu's "Tuesday Drama Talk" 火曜劇話, Hu Daojing's 胡道靜 (1913-2003) "Wednesday Newspaper Talk" 水曜報話, Wu Shanqing's 吳山青 "Collection Talk" 集藏漫談, Shao Xunmei's "Friday Poetry Talk" 金曜詩話 and Xu Zeren's 徐澤人 "Chinese Handicraft Talk" 中國美術工藝漫談. During 1938 to 1939, Xu Xu published 23 articles in "Tuesday Drama Talk" discussing about the aesthetic theories and performing techniques of modern and traditional drama (listed in appendix 2).⁵⁰ Only one of his articles concerns the general problem of propaganda or nationalism; in that piece he follows the view of the Analects group that drama should not be deliberately used as propaganda device.⁵¹

⁴⁹ See Michel Hockx and Kirk A Denton, *Literary Societies of Republican China* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008), 210. There was a loose circle of *Hai Pai* 海派 (Shanghai School) including Shao Xunmei and other "English-language-educated intellectuals". Overseas student Xu Xu, as one of the feature editor of *Analects*, was among one of them, and had intimate friendship with Lin Yutang, Shao Xunmei and other writers and editors. At the new year of 1941, Xu was living at Shao Xunmei's place. See Xiaohong Shao, "Poxiang," *Apple Daily*, April 28, 2013. Accessed April 28, 2016. <http://hk.apple.nextmedia.com/supplement/apple/art/20130428/18242268>.

⁵⁰ Xu Xu misremembered in the 1960s that he published seventy to eighty thousand words during 1939 to 1941 on the Sino-US Daily. See Xu Xu, *Xu Xu quanji* (The Complete Works of Xu Xu), vol. 8 (Taipei: Cheng Chung Book Company, 1980), 505. The correct date is 1938 to 1939.

⁵¹ Xu Xu, "Xiju zuowei kangzhan de xuanchuan" (Drama as Anti-Japanese Propaganda Device), *Sino-US Daily*, November 29, 1938, sec. Jina.

Around the same time, Xu Xu started to publish his series of Sansi⁵² Pavilion Book Monthly 三思樓月書 in late 1939. According to an advertisement, Xu Xu had planned to publish one work each month. Readers got a discount if they subscribed to the series. The series published all his works, including drama scripts, novels, and essays.⁵³ This series became his signature group of publications and was republished again and again in a serial format in Shanghai, Chongqing, Hong Kong and Taipei. According to an industry insider, Liuwen 柳聞, Xu Xu's series was published concurrently in Shanghai and Chongqing by two local publishing agents. Two agents each sold around 10,000 copies of each book in the collection.⁵⁴ Publishing regularly was an opportunity as well as a challenge for Xu Xu. The stable submission and sales volume guaranteed him a steady readership. And compared to publishing standalone books in certain publishing house, owning a collection and the long-term collaboration with one press entitled Xu Xu a relatively constant writing environment. However, to maintain the series, he needed to know how to attract audience on a continual basis.

"Orphan Island" Shanghai was no longer a peaceful and prosperous metropolis. The city was divided into Japanese occupied areas and Western controlled regions, each

⁵² "Sansi" generally means think carefully in Chinese. The word first appears in "Gong Ye Chang" of *The Analects*: "Ji Wen thought thrice, and then acted." (Translated by James Legge, see <http://ctext.org/analects/gong-ye-chang>. Accessed May 25, 2010.)

⁵³ "Xinkan jieshao," *Shen Bao*, December 21, 1939.

⁵⁴ Liu Wen, "Xu Xu · qiren" (Xu Xu · the man), *Yuanfeng* (Distant Wind), no. 4 (1947): 84.

with their own juridical and administrative systems.⁵⁵ The Municipal Council, in principle, protected residents in the concessions. The Japanese, however, with Chinese assistance, terrorized intellectuals with assassination.⁵⁶ Meanwhile, governors of foreign settlements, out of self-interest, remained indifferent to terrorism directed at Chinese citizens. The office of the progressive newspaper *Wen Wei Po* 文匯報, for example, suffered two bomb attacks during the "Orphan Island" period.⁵⁷

Historian Poshek Fu argues that intellectuals faced three choices—passivity, resistance, and collaboration—in occupied Shanghai between 1937 and 1945.⁵⁸ Xu Xu, like other intellectuals in the region, was judged and influenced by the dilemma Fu calls "personal survival" versus the "patriotic ideal."⁵⁹ But Fu's politics-oriented argument neglects writers' personal artistic and career pursuit as a motivation for writing. He defines nationalism and patriotism as the sole criteria to judge writers' activity at the time, which neglects other factors like earning a living or literary reputation.

⁵⁵ Before the breakout of the Pacific War, the international settlement and the French concession had been maintaining their administrative function. Japanese army took other parts of Shanghai. Later they propped up Wang Jingwei's puppet government and helped settles Special Services Section at 76 Jessfield Road. See more wartime studies from Wen-Hsin Yeh, ed., *Wartime Shanghai* (London; New York: Routledge, 1998).

⁵⁶ The most famous story is about Cai Diaotu 蔡鈞徒 (1904-38). His ambiguous political choice led to his death in 1938. The Japanese hanged his head from a telegraph pole. See Xu Zhucheng, *Baohai jiuwen* (Old News of the Newspaper Field) (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1981).

⁵⁷ Xu Zhucheng, *Xu Zhucheng huiyilu* (Recollection of Xu Zhucheng) (Beijing: Sanlian Shudian, 1998), 149.

⁵⁸ See Poshek Fu, *Passivity, Resistance, and Collaboration: Intellectual Choices in Occupied Shanghai, 1937-1945* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1993).

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, xiv.

As a professional writer, Xu Xu persisted in expressing his liberal cosmopolitan vision and gained a positive market reception without too much wartime moral and political struggle. However, he did not completely discard patriotic considerations. How, as a writer, did he reconcile his cosmopolitan beliefs and nationalism? How did Shanghai readers accept his works? Some answers may be found from the case of Xu's drama script *An Effective Military Weapon* 軍事利器 (1939).

2.4 A Play for Wartime Reading: *An Effective Military Weapon* (1939)

Xu Xu's proses and fictional stories appeared in *West Wind Monthly* in his column "Sentiments from Abroad." This series, which the editor praised for its "fresh and lucid style" and "complicated and fantastic plot," was popular with readers for a long time. The editor also mentioned in the introduction that readers keep asking for Xu Xu's new "sentimental" 情調 articles.⁶⁰ In fact, Xu Xu's "Sentiments" does not present his actual experience in Europe. As he confessed at the beginning of the story "My Landlady in Britain" 我在英國時的房東: "Sentiments are no more than the things I feel. It is already difficult to say whether they are reliable or not. As for the story plot, the sentiment is true, but they are otherwise completely fictional."⁶¹

⁶⁰ "Bianzhe de hua" (Editors' words), *West Wind Monthly*, no. 47 (1940): 427.

⁶¹ Xu Xu, "Wo zai yingguo shi de fangdong" (My Landlady in Britain), *West Wind Monthly*, no. 36 (1939): 561.

When Xu Xu decided to republish those pieces in collections, he separated essays and fictional narrative works into the prose anthologies *Flow to the West* 西流集 (1940), *Fragments from Abroad* 海外的鱗爪 (1940), collection of short fictions *Sentiments from Abroad* (1941) and standalone novellas. Xu Xu's travel essays give a general idea of his "global consciousness" 世界意識 and "overall vision" 整體眼光.⁶² Comparing China with the rest of the world is an effective way to criticize the problem of a nation and its people. According to Frederick Green, in these collections, Xu Xu "evaluate[s] his own cultural background and negotiate[s] China's position in the global framework of modernism and modernity."⁶³ Green argues that in "affirming China's vast cultural legacy and believing in its potential [Xu Xu] blended his affirmative nationalism with poignant criticism of national vices."⁶⁴ In essays such as "Improving Individuals and Improving Environment" 改良個體與改良環境 (1936), Xu Xu explores the theme of Chinese people's adaptation into various cultural environments on his journey to Europe. Comparing China and colonized Hong Kong, he concludes "Chinese people only pursue adaption to the environment. Their fatal mistake is that they dare not to resist the environment."⁶⁵ In his 1937⁶⁶ essay "Moon over Venice" 威尼斯之月, Xu Xu, after a general comparison of Western and Chinese landscapes and culture, discusses the

⁶² Wu, *Piaobo de dushi zhi hun: Xu Xu lun*, 118.

⁶³ Green, "A Chinese Romantic's Journey through Time and Space," 94.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Xu Xu, *Xu Xu quanji*, vol. 10 (Taipei: Cheng Chung Book Company, 1980), 6.

⁶⁶ In Xu Xu's collected works (1980), the date of composition is given as December 1st, 1936. It was published in *West Wind Monthly* in April 1937.

misconception among overseas students that "the moon over Venice is rounder than the one over China."⁶⁷ I agree with Green that this nationalism, or affirmation of Chineseness, was prerequisite to Xu Xu's cosmopolitanism. Yet Xu Xu's literary goal is not just to strengthen Chinese national identity in relation to Western countries, but to establish its equality before taking the next step into cosmopolitanism.

An Effective Military Weapon, a four-act play, appeared months before the European war breaking out in 1939 in the series of "Sentiments from Abroad" in *West Wind Monthly*. The play reveals how Xu Xu pursued both a cosmopolitan interpretation of the intense international situation and a liberal exploration of the dramaturgy. Curiously, Xu Xu did not classify this script into any of his drama collections, but attributed it into *Sentiments from Abroad*,⁶⁸ which implies that the script was meant to be treated as a piece for reading, not for performing. The play is divided into four independent scenes. Xu Xu presents the background setting of each scene in the subjunctive. The first scene, "I'll say for the time being " 我姑且說, happened on a train at a "certain" 有那麼 twilight, and involved "for example" 比方說 three passengers: the author, an old women and a middle-aged Belgian man.⁶⁹ The subjunctive mood reminds readers that this is a fictional incident.

⁶⁷ Xu Xu, "Wei ni si zhi yue" (Moon over Venice), *West Wind Monthly*, no. 7-12 (1937): 156.

⁶⁸ Jia Zhifang et al., eds., *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue zong shumu* (General Catalogue of Chinese Modern Literature) (Fuzhou: Fuzhou jiaoyu chubanshe, 1993), 492. In this bibliography, the editors catalogue *Sentiment from Abroad* in the section of "fictions."

⁶⁹ Xu Xu, *Junshi liqi* (An Effective Military Weapon), *West Wind Monthly*, no. 33 (1939): 226.

The story follows the author's journey to Germany. In scene one, the old lady, the author and a Belgian man have a conversation about character of youths in different nations. The old woman thinks that young people from the superpowers—Britain, France, Germany, the United States—have obvious flaws. In contrast, she finds merits in youths from relatively small countries, including the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, Czechoslovakia and China. The topic of their discussion then shifts to the conflict between Germany and France. The man and the old lady have divergent estimations about about who will win. The old lady considers the wealth of France as a significant advantage for victory, but the Belgian man thinks that Germany will win because they possess more effective weapons.

In scene two, the author, in Germany, visits an old couple. The couple tells the author that young generation in German is so crazy for the nation that they neglect their family and daily life. The author claims that China, in contrast, is more like a family than a strong nation. The old couple still remember the trauma of World War I, and are not satisfied with the crazy military accumulation of their nation at the time. During the conversation, the old couple is constantly afraid their conversation will be overheard by their sons who are about to come back home, or by other unknown eavesdroppers.

In scene three, the author meets the old couple's three sons. They are all good at shooting and proud of Germany's advanced weapons. They suggest that China should imitate Germany, as Japan did. The author tells them that the best German weapon is the

youth of the nation, because other countries can buy their weapons, but not acquire their human resources. The author also finds it regrettable that Germany pursues world hegemony instead of being what he laughingly calls a “good husband of German beauties and good father for the smart children in the future.”⁷⁰

Scene four happens at "a random spot on the earth."⁷¹ The author interviews, "for example,"⁷² a military expert from Soviet Union. The author asks question about 3M: munitions, money and men. The expert, speaking in an eloquent manner, analyzes the current international situation and points out that "confidence, bravery, purity and blind faith"⁷³ are important elements for German taking human as weapon. The expert declares that human power of China in the army is inefficient, and it's dangerous to underestimate its latent strength. The author, bored, is dissatisfied with this answer and replies in a sarcastic tone: "I already knew all this. You must be tired. Let's go to sleep. It's late."⁷⁴

The script presents a fictional geographic journey. Rather than using or mimicing foreign languages to establish the images of the Westerners in the scripts, Xu Xu makes the foreigners in this script speak fluent and even refined Chinese. As Beck defined in *Cosmopolitan Vision* (2006), cosmopolitan vision is "a sense of boundarylessness" and "an everyday, historically alert, reflexive awareness of ambivalences in a milieu of

⁷⁰ Ibid., 232.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid., 233.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

blurring, differentiations and cultural contradictions."⁷⁵ In this play, Xu Xu blurs the discrepancy of languages and presents all characters as inhabiting the same language environment. He constructs a reflective space for people from different nations to discuss their concerns about the world.

In this play set in wartime Europe, China, though one of the major topics of conversation, is but one of many. In four scenes, Xu Xu repeatedly positions China within a transnational dialogue. Rather than apply the common category of West vs. East or Europe vs. Asia, he sees China, a country with merits, as standing alongside nations such as the Netherlands, Czechoslovakia, and Denmark. Xu Xu expresses his nationalism in relative terms. In this reproduction of interpersonal relations between nations, Xu Xu positions China as a member of a world community. He presents an equality of national identities, which enables the author to take part in a productive global conversation. In Act IV, Xu Xu moves the location to "a random spot on the earth" to indicate his ambition to bring the argument out of a regional space.

In earlier scripts, Xu Xu also made characters, time and locations indeterminate. In "One Star in the Bottom of the Heart", for example, characters are identified only by occupation: "female dramatist", "maiden" and "journalist." The action happens "anytime," "anywhere."⁷⁶ In another play, "Empty Regrets," the incident happens at "a dusk of any day" in "a city of anywhere." In those scripts, Xu Xu highlights the

¹⁴⁵ Ulrich Beck, *Cosmopolitan Vision* (Cambridge: Polity, 2006), 3.

⁷⁶ Xu, "Xindi de Yixing 心底的一星," 129.

insignificance of time and location, which amplifies the importance of the universal.

In *An Effective Military Weapon*, Xu Xu considers youth as a nation's most significant resource. However, though Xu Xu appreciates the younger generation and technological military progress, he reveals implicit opposition towards world war through the old couple's complaint, the author's laugh at the aggressive brothers and his impatience at the Soviet expert's tedious speech on weapons and war. Though resonating with the ongoing battles and suffered in China, his opposition echos a broader concern about the world in a whole.

Though written as a drama script, Xu Xu's narrative is readerly, its presentation of space and persona deliberately emphasizing a subjunctive mood. This virtuality confounds the stable dimensions of a traditional stage play. Indeed, the subjunctive adverbs in the stage directions can only be perceived while reading the text.

The protagonist, "the author," is a projection of Xu Xu himself. As in his other five first-person stories in the "Sentiments from Abroad" series, Xu Xu creates a fictional alter ego. The author, a Chinese traveler in Europe, serves as a fictional authority to convey the authenticity of virtual events. And the text, unlike a stage production, constantly reminds us of his identity as the "author." Through this drama script, Xu Xu explores the genre possibilities of drama. It requires readers to reflect from a distance. This drama script for reading depends heavily on the skills of narration.

The playfulness of this script, which imagines a global conversation among cosmopolitan fellow travelers, is striking in the context of 1939 Shanghai. The drama comments both the position of China in the world, as well as the intensive situation of the world as a traveller and world citizen. I regard these techniques as Xu Xu's ambition to apply his liberal cosmopolitan outlook with a specific aesthetic method in dramatic works. This play reveals how Xu Xu, as a writer living in turbulence, both expressed a cosmopolitan ethos and experimented with literary genres.

Xu Xu's early career is a transformation from a student to a professional writer. His family background, his education in Beijing, his partial apprenticeship in the Analects group, and his sojourn in Europe all contributed to a bourgeois literary philosophy of cosmopolitanism that influenced his later career as a professional writer. Even during wartime, Xu Xu continued to promote liberal cosmopolitanism through his writing. Since Chinese writers in Shanghai were then living under Japanese threat, they couldn't explicitly express their nationalism. The climate of wartime Shanghai, in other words, suppressed explicitly patriotic propaganda. One of its indirect consequences was to allow Xu Xu to focus his composition more on aesthetic values and universal humanism rather than on national imperatives.

3. Xu Xu's Wartime Dramatic Vision

An Effective Military Weapon is an early demonstration of Xu Xu's concern for all peoples and nations. This particular play also showed that Xu Xu could be playful. His longer works, motivated primarily by a liberal cosmopolitan ethos and the need to survive in the political climate of wartime, integrate multiple agendas of aesthetics, social criticism, politics and commercial needs.

In this chapter, I contextualize Xu Xu's dramatic theory in relation to prevailing dramatic trends. As a dramatist, Xu Xu emphasized aesthetic enjoyment over patriotic propaganda and pedagogy. He introduced an aesthetic psychological theory from American psychologist Herbert Langfeld (1879-1958). Xu Xu translated part of Langfeld's book and added his own interpretations. Though Xu Xu's own opinions are fragmental and sometimes superficial, aesthetic psychology affects his dramatic notion from the perspective of audience's reaction. Langfeld's introduction of the psychological theory about the mechanism of aesthetic appreciation underpins Xu Xu's own liberal expressions for literature.

In his tragedies *Life and Death* and *Mother's Portrait* and his verse drama *When the Tides Come*, Xu Xu presents his consideration for the existence of human being through his metaphysical conversations and complicated plots. Xu Xu practiced his intention to value aesthetic appreciations in these plays. Meanwhile, they reflect Xu Xu's disappointment to the domestic situation after the May Fourth Movement. The solution

Xu Xu advocated for survival in this depressing society is to reconcile with the society by showing the individualist's love to companions, life and the future.

However, Xu Xu's preference of drama did not fully accept by the wartime theatrical circle. I contend that the failure of Xu Xu's dramas on stage as a result of the incongruity of his aesthetic dramatic vision within the wartime theatrical market. As a result, Xu Xu focused more on the literary expression rather than the dramatic expressions of his drama scripts.

3.1 The Theatre of War: Commercial and Patriotic Plays in Shanghai

“Spoken drama” was a developing artistic genre in 1930s China. After experiencing the failure of “political oriented”⁷⁷ civilized play 文明戲 in early 1920s, practitioners proposed a “new drama” 新劇 to replace it. Ouyang Yuqian 歐陽予倩 (1889-1962), Tian Han 田漢 (1898-1968) and Hong Shen 洪深 (1894-1955) are three pioneers who introduced adapted foreign and historical plays to the modern Chinese stage. For example, Hong Shen's *The Young Mistress's Fan* 少奶奶的扇子 (1924), adapted from Oscar Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1892), was successfully performed by the amateurs' group Drama Associated Society 戲劇協社 of Shanghai Zhonghua Professional School 中華職業學校 in 1924. After the success of this play, dramatists realized that there was a market for foreign adaptations. However, though the sluggish market for spoken drama

⁷⁷ Xiaomei Chen, ed., *The Columbia Anthology of Modern Chinese Drama* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 3.

picked up, not until 1933 did China have its first professional troupe, the China Traveling Theater Company 中國旅行劇團. Due to audiences' preference for traditional drama, most spoken drama troupes were amateurs' group attached to schools.

In 1936, China Traveling Theater Company achieved the first commercial success, which ushered in an era of commercial theater.⁷⁸ After 1937, several professional troupes in Shanghai gained mass popularity under the shadow of the Japanese invasion. War also disrupted the film industry and enhanced the popularity of spoken drama. Actors devoted themselves to patriotic spoken drama career around the country.⁷⁹ These troupes had well-organized practitioners and performing plans. Shanghai Theater Arts Society 上海劇藝社, organized by playwrights Li Jianwu 李健吾 (1906-82) and Yü Ling 于伶 (1907-97),⁸⁰ for example, generated an intimate relation between playwrights, directors and actors. Some critics even considered Yü Ling's *Shanghai Night* 夜上海 (1939) to pander to the audience by inserting too many entertaining plots and thereby losing artistic value.⁸¹ Meanwhile, as the Japanese made advances into Chinese territory, intellectuals, in "a shift toward cultural homogenization," devoted themselves to "national salvation literature."⁸² Theater practitioners were no exception, and allegorical historical plays, as

⁷⁸ Shao Yingjian, *Shanghai kangzhan shiqi de huaaju* (Spoken Drama during Anti-Japanese Period in Shanghai) (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2012), 5.

⁷⁹ Du Yunzhi, *Zhongguo dianying shi* (History of Chinese Cinema), vol. 2 (Taipei: The Commercial Press, 1972), 3.

⁸⁰ Hu Die, *Shanghai gudao huaaju yanjiu* (Study of Drama in Orphan Island Shanghai) (Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe, 2009), 43.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 70.

⁸² Joshua S. Mostow et al., eds., *The Columbia Companion to Modern East Asian Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 295.

well as realistic plays depicting tough realities, became major passive resistance for playwrights remaining in Shanghai.⁸³

Meanwhile, in the hinterland, the All-China Anti-Japanese Federation of Dramatists 中華全國戲劇界抗敵協會 established in Wuhan promoted drama as propaganda. Hong Shen, as the pivotal member of the organization with left-wing artistic tendencies, regarded art as "the reflection of real life." Since Anti-Japanese resistance was the priority of the whole country, he wrote in 1937, "each and every artistic department in China . . . should present enemy's brutality, and reflect the emotion of masses' resistance."⁸⁴

In 1976 Xu Xu recalled in a history of Chinese literature that spoken drama during wartime actively propagandized the resistance effort:

However, because of the War of Resistance, the arts had to fulfill its "propaganda responsibilities" to the utmost. The Literary Association called for "literature to go down to the countryside" and "literature to enter the army," so artistic quality was an unbroachable topic.

⁸³ Edward M Gunn, *Unwelcome Muse: Chinese Literature in Shanghai and Peking, 1937-1945* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 115–27. In the chapter, Gunn discusses about the prevalence of the realistic plays by Yü Ling and costume drama by A Ying, Chou I-pai 周貽白 (Zhou Yibai) and Ku chung-i 顧仲彝 (Gu Zhongyi) during wartime. Those plays also shows audience's strong patriotic needs at the time. Two representative plays are Yü Ling's *Shanghai Night* and A Ying's 阿英 *Sorrow for the Fall of the Ming* 明末遺恨 (1939). *Shanghai Night* exposes the tough life at the boundary of the concession and the occupied Chinese city. *Sorrow for the Fall of the Ming* is a historical play about the heroine Ge Nengniang fighting against Qing invaders.

⁸⁴ Hong Shen, "Zuijin de geren de jianjie" (My Recent Personal Opinion), in *Hong Shen wenji* (Collected Works of Hong Shen), vol. 2 (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 1957), 621.

但因為抗戰，文藝須盡“宣傳的責任”，文協的號召，當時所謂“文章下鄉”“文章入伍”，所以所謂藝術的水平是談不到的。⁸⁵

He concluded about the situation of the arts during the resistance period: "arts indeed took the service for the resistance seriously. Under these circumstances, immature and superficial works were of course unavoidable . . . "⁸⁶ Though Xu Xu, looking back, recognized the pragmatism of mainstream spoken drama of the war period, as a wartime playwright himself in semi-occupied Shanghai, he sought to supplant the standard nationalistic propaganda with aesthetic appreciation and his own propagandaizing agenda.

3.2 An Advocate of Aestheticism and "Psychical Distance"

Xu Xu's theoretical writings about drama, as well as about half of his drama scripts, have little direct relationship to the chaotic reality in which they were written. From 1938 to 1939, he published over twenty articles in a weekly column of the *Sino-US Daily* about his ideal model of spoken drama and his impressions of other forms of drama, such as Peking opera, musicals and puppetry. Xu Xu also introduced an aesthetic theory of drama deeply influenced by the American psychologist Herbert Langfeld. Xu Xu had previously studied literature and drama, as well as psychology and philosophy. In embracing

⁸⁵ Xu, *Xiandai Zhongguo wenxue guoyanlu*, 108–9.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 110.

Langfeld's theories, Xu Xu analyzes performances on the stage from an aesthetic psychological perspective.

Herbert Langfeld was a renowned laboratory psychologist who taught at Harvard and Princeton. Xu Xu refers to Langfeld's most important monograph *The Aesthetic Attitude* (1920), which articulates his agreement with Lipps' concept of empathy, as well as with many ideas advanced by Gestalt school on the influence of structure and form on perception⁸⁷ by integrating examples from various arts, such as drama and music. Langfeld's writings inspired Xu Xu's criteria to evaluate spoken drama.

Xu Xu's discussion of dramatic aesthetics in "Tuesday Drama Talk" adopts the framework of *The Aesthetic Attitude*. He first discusses the definition and the history of the term "aesthetic" since ancient Greece. Aesthetics, he says, is not only about literary form; he points out that a plenty of successful playwrights, such as Shakespeare, give more to moral justice.⁸⁸ In reconciling moral content and literary form, Xu Xu agrees with Langfeld that aesthetics is "a science rather than a philosophy."⁸⁹ Under the influence of physiological aesthetics from Europe, Langfeld considers aesthetic appreciation relates to both intellectual and physiological action.⁹⁰ Though not all the

⁸⁷ David C. Devonis, "Langfeld, Herbert Sidney," in *Encyclopedia of the History of Psychological Theories*, ed. Robert W. Rieber (New York, NY: Springer US, 2012), 617.

⁸⁸ Xu Xu, "Xiju mei de genju" (Standards of Dramatic Aesthetics), *Sino-US Daily*, January 24, 1939, sec. Jina.

⁸⁹ Herbert Sidney Langfeld, *The Aesthetic Attitude* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920), 33.

⁹⁰ Physiological aesthetics is an interdisciplinary popular from late 19th century to early 20th century. Artists adopted ideas, instruments and techniques from experimental physiology to reconfigure the human sensorium and devise new formal languages of arts, including

movement in muscles, breathing or nerve could be seen as a reaction to aesthetics, a pleasing object, regardless its form or content, can definitely trigger the corresponding motor response for aesthetic appreciation.

Langfeld suggests that "motor response" is a subconscious physiological tendency of movement toward an object of perception. Generally, when people observe certain artworks or other objects, the objects arouse the memory of former movements, then the brain forms corresponding movement in beholder's nerves and muscles.⁹¹ Langfeld considers the pattern, which is more of a physiological movement than a psychological one, as the key process for human to obtain the aesthetic awareness. Xu Xu agrees with Langfeld's argument completely, concluding that one's former sensory experience and the stimulus for triggering certain motor responses are both significant to aesthetic appreciation. While he regards beholder's memories as an intellectual retrospect, the stimulus could be emotional. He further explains that the motor response is so subtle that sometime it could only be detected by advanced laboratory instruments.⁹² Applying the theory from a playwright's perspective, Xu Xu treats the audience as a single organism. He then asserts that something essential to every ordinary life could contribute to a

aesthetic appreciations, empathy and so forth. They use physiological and laboratory approaches to examine how perception of the arts produces a corresponding movement in the beholder's eye muscles, bodily musculature or other physical organisms. See Robert Brain, *The Pulse of Modernism: Physiological Aesthetics in Fin-de-Siècle Europe* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2015), xiii–xviii.

⁹¹ Ibid., 110–11.

⁹² Xu, "Xiju mei de genju."

perfect aesthetic play resonant with every human being. Both intellectual and emotional stimuli have the possibility to cause aesthetic appreciation.

In the next four column essays, Xu Xu introduces and discusses Langfeld's concept of "empathy" as a crucial motor response; empathy, he claims, is what connects play and audience. Langfeld explains the psychological phenomenon of "empathy" by drawing on arguments from Theodor Lipps (1851-1914) and Karl Groos (1861-1946), who consider empathetic behavior to be imitation of the gestures or expressions of others and thus "a projection of self into the object."⁹³

Xu Xu translates "empathy" as "emotion moving in" 情感移入. His focus is not the legitimacy of the term but methods for applying "empathy" in practice. "We cannot declare that all empathetic reactions are beautiful, but we can be content that the sensation of beauty always derives from empathy."⁹⁴ For Xu Xu, drama is the best artistic method to inspire empathy, since "this stage art is conveyed by human beings, [and] all these movements, dialogues and facial expressions are common to all human beings; this is why [drama] is more deeply and thoroughly empathetic than other art forms."⁹⁵ Drama, to Xu Xu, is an art form concerned only with human beings. Every

⁹³ See Ibid., 120.

⁹⁴ Xu Xu, "Xiju Yu Qinggan Yiru" (Drama and Empathy), *Sino-US Daily*, January 31, 1939, sec. Jina.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

person is capable, and, more importantly, willing to project him or herself into this art form.⁹⁶

Actors and directors' abilities are the dominant factors in generating empathy. Only if actors convey correct facial and body expressions and speech patterns (including accents) will spectators respond with proper empathy. Xu Xu gives an example of Uncle Josh from the American rural comedy "The Old Homestead." In one scene, Josh cannot open eyes for a towel while washing his face with soap. Xu Xu explains that a vivid performance would trigger empathy from audience members who have had a similar experience.

Xu Xu nevertheless considers some types of onstage empathy, such those created by improper stage props and problematic performances, to be harmful. In the balcony scene from *Romeo and Juliet*, he argues, the audience may worry about the fragile props while Romeo climbing to the balcony. It triggers audience's inappropriate empathy for the safety of the theatre properties in a romantic moment. Audience should not be distracted by anything other than the details of the plots. So Xu Xu suggests actors and directors should aim for a "coordinated and balanced unification" of emotional elements in their creations to prevent the wrong empathy.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Xu Xu, "Youxiao de yu youhai de yi qing Fanying" (Effective and Harmful Empathy Response), *Sino-US Daily*, February 28, 1939, sec. Jina.

Xu Xu further posits an asethetic state of "psychical distance" 美的距離 from Langfeld's book. "Psychical distance" is an influencial aesthetic-attitude concept invented by the English aesthetician Edward Bullough (1880-1934)⁹⁸. It is a psychological state in which observers maintain a certain mental distance from the objects.⁹⁹ In watching a play, Langfeld claims, one should not identify oneself with one character but "be swayed back and forth by the conflicting forces [of the players in the drama]."¹⁰⁰ When the audience starts to replace the plots with their own experience, then they are getting too close and risk losing their aesthetic distance from the play.¹⁰¹ In Xu Xu's view, drama should be detached from the real physical environment." All the elements of a realistic past should be relinquished, since they may remind spectators their own past, then it ruins the feeling of isolation."¹⁰² In other words, playwrights should avoid writing in such a way as to enable spectators to conflate the fiction drama with their own reality. Xu Xu criticizes old Chinese theatre's tendency to destroy the psychical distance, and the casual and noisy interruptions of theatre audiences, because they prevent the development of spectators' aesthetic appreciation.¹⁰³

⁹⁸ George Dickie, *Introduction to Aesthetics: An Analytic Approach* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 28.

⁹⁹ Langfeld, *The Aesthetic Attitude*, 57–59.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 60.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 61.

¹⁰² Xu Xu, "Xiju yu mei de juli shang" (Drama and the Aesthetic Distance I), *Sino-US Daily*, March 7, 1939, sec. Jina.

¹⁰³ Xu Xu, "Mei de juli yu xiju xia" (Drama and the Aesthetic Distance II), *Sino-US Daily*, March 14, 1939, sec. Jina.

Xu Xu cautions theatre spectators not to fall for theatrical illusions of the reality. In "Illusion on the Stage" 在舞台上的錯覺 he quotes Langfeld's argument of the concept of "aesthetic attitude" to emphasize the importance of the play's "unreality":

The question of realism in art has caused much difficulty because it involves ideas that appear hard to reconcile. The dramatic critic asks for "real" situations and "real" scenarios. He objects to a play that seems artificial, that does not correspond to life, yet we have said that a true aesthetic enjoyment demands a sense of unreality. The seeming contradiction is readily explained by the fact that the object may be as real in the sense of true to life, as is consistent with the intent of the artist, but the attitude of the observer should be different from that generally assumed toward the world. If we are able to maintain an aesthetic attitude, the most stirring real play will continue to be a play for us, and the most ultra-realistic picture will continue to be a work of art, and the most life-like statue will remain for us a series of graceful lines in marble; that is, we shall have maintained our distance, and the object will have remained an object of beauty.¹⁰⁴

Xu Xu raises an example from a stage performance of Peking opera "Cao Cao Had the Emperor in His Power" 曹操逼宮, in which a spectator was so angry that he pounced on the actor and stabbed him to death. The cause of this tragedy is that the spectator lost his psychical distance to this emotional performance and fell for a realistic illusion. Xu Xu uses the example to demonstrate the perils of the extremely emotional scenes to destroy aesthetic distance. Xu Xu argues that not every eye-catching performance is artistically successful. The true arts should make audience immersed in

¹⁰⁴ Langfeld, *The Aesthetic Attitude*, 68–69. The paragraph is completely quoted in Xu Xu's article. See Xu Xu, "Zai wutai shang de cuojue" (Illusion on Stage), *Sino-US Daily*, March 28, 1939, sec. 8.

the flow of the play rather than considering their own sentiment and state during the performance. Thus, it's important to manage a sense of unreality. For example, Abstract and conventional arts forms such as verse drama, opera and ballet can easily keep the satisfactory distance.¹⁰⁵

Then Xu Xu discusses the issue of aesthetic attitude from the perspectives of performer, director and playwright. He upholds common human emotion and artistic expressions as two important factors for a play. The directors and actors take the most crucial responsibilities in this process. On one hand, directors and actors should try their best to avoid unnatural performance, bold make-up, inferior stage props and so forth that would distract the audience. On the other hand, they should not devote too much realistic emotion that may arouse audience's personal emotional reaction. Playwrights, though is not the prime concern in Xu Xu's argument, should tap into the universal emotional resonance among human beings to arouse spectators' empathy response, as well as to balance the happiness, sadness and other emotions in the play. However, Xu Xu does not illuminate the concrete method about how to balance the emotion and what should playwright write in the play. The theory for him is more of a declaration to prior aesthetics to any other purpose for spoken drama.

Aesthetic psychology helped Xu Xu to explain spoken drama is not compulsory. In responding to the question of whether dramatists should make anti-Japanese

¹⁰⁵ Xu Xu, "Zai wutai shang de cuojue."

propaganda, Xu Xu gives a rather ambiguous answer that they should aim for by applying the rule of psychological distance. "The purpose of art, to an aesthete, is to arouse the sense of beauty with a proper psychological distance, and to transform all ugly realities and sorrows into aesthetic appreciation."¹⁰⁶ Xu Xu does not recognize nationalistic propaganda plays as an art. He contends that revolutionaries deliberately invest too much realistic emotion in their propaganda plays and use that emotion to provoke patriotism of the public, thus those plays lose the psychological distance and the ability to appreciate every object in the plays.

Xu Xu selected paragraphs useful for him to translate and weave into his own argument. Langford's theory helps Xu Xu enrich his understanding of spoken drama as a media of the human emotions, as well as support his aesthetic-oriented literary and dramatic purpose in wartime. Though Xu Xu did not continue his theoretical studies on aesthetics, he tried hard to put the aesthetic rules into practice in composing several tragedies about domestic conflict.

3.3 Projecting an Individualist's Humanity and Love via Drama

Life and Death, verse drama *When the Tides Come* and *Mother's Portrait* are three plays Xu Xu wrote in 1939, 1940 and 1941 in Shanghai. These three plays represent Xu Xu's

¹⁰⁶ Xu, "Xiju zuowei kangzhan de xuanchuan."

concern for the Chinese society in general and his aesthetic preference for scripts as a literary genre.

Life and Death and *Mother's Portrait* are four-act plays set in modern China. These two plays are full of melodramatic characters. As Peter Brooks defines in his *Melodramatic Imagination* (1976), melodrama points to “a mode of high emotionalism and stark ethical conflict that is neither comic nor tragic in persons, structure, intent, effect.”¹⁰⁷ The notion is identical to Xu Xu’s aesthetic preference to arouse audience’s empathy.

In these two plays, he is keen on the human relationships between and within the families. Some of the expressions are melodramatic clichés of an emotional mode of excess; however, he breaks another golden rule of the melodrama, the essential conflict between good and evil, to fulfill his own liberal didacticism regarding individuals. In these two plays, stage directions indicate vaguely that the venue is "China" and the time period is "Modern era." There is no other specific time and location mentioned in the play.¹⁰⁸ Each play focuses on several stories that occur in different typical urban families. Both feature discussions of the destiny of human beings and disputes over love and fortune. In each, Xu Xu constructs complicated character relationships between different statuses and generations to trigger empathy of readers and audiences from various classes.

¹⁰⁷ Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), 12.

¹⁰⁸ See Xu Xu, *Sheng yu si* (Life and Death) (Shanghai: Yechuang shuwu, 1939), 1.

He also includes deliberately stylized dialogues to encourage readers to maintain psychological distance from dramatic events.

In *Life and Death*, Xu Xu depicts three families in a vaguely indicated "modern China" with no further time or location markers: The first is an unemployed middle-class man, Zhang Qizhai 張企齋, and his daughter Meidu 美度; the second, a wealthy businessman Chen Bowei's 陳伯偉 loveless family, and, third, a poor family surnamed Zhang with neither money nor love. The plot runs as follows: Eight years ago, when Zhang Qizhai was enjoying his licentious life in Shanghai, his wife and Meidu's two elder siblings died in a shipwreck while sailing from Yantai to Shanghai. The younger daughter, Meidu, then lived with her father and nanny Han 韓媽. This adorable young lady has a boyfriend, Xu Ning 徐寧, and other close friends, such as Chen Suqi 陳素騏, who is Chen Bowei's younger son, and Shen Shoubai 潘守白, who has been caught by the police as a suspected secret agent. Suqi's elder brother and Meidu's classmate, Chen Sulong 陳素龍, who loves Meidu but was refused by her, hires a killer to murder Xu Ning. Sulong also discovers that his stepmother is having an extramarital affair and blackmails her for six thousand dollars. The stepmother then asks a servant to hire another killer to kill Sulong.

In poor Zhang's family, Mrs. Zhang opposes the romantic relationship between her daughter Zhang Jianping 張劍平 and Shen Shoubai. For her, "humans are not

reliable at all. Only money is trustworthy."¹⁰⁹ Jianping's elder brother, Jianxiao 劍曉, a military veteran, in order to get money to bail Shoubai out of prison, accepts both offers to kill Sulong and Xu Ning.

In the resulting catastrophe, happiness blends with sorrow. Zhang Qizhai finally finds a decent job under his daughter's encouragement. Zhang Jianxiao accidentally kills Chen Suqi. Sulong, who knows the truth, fabricates the rumor that Xu Ning is the murderer. Meidu, Shoubai, Jianping and Suqi's girlfriend Zhongmei 仲梅 are shocked and panic by the murder. Meanwhile, Zhang Qizhai immediately recognizes Jianping and Jianxiao as his children who supposedly died in the shipwreck. Then, just as everyone is cheering up about this new lease on life, Jianxiao confesses that he is the murderer and is quickly taken into custody by the police. He claims that, as a veteran soldier, he is disappointed with society. "After we've gone through a blood-bath, society and nation have no sympathy and pity for us at all. Wealthy authorities are still brutal, while the poor people still struggle. They haven't realized any ideal or hope for us."¹¹⁰ For the sake of his family, he becomes a hired killer, as he was on the battlefield.

The first publication of Shanghai's Sansi Pavilion Book Monthly, *Life and Death* was a great hit in 1939. The first edition sold out within two months.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 70.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 141.

¹¹¹ Xu, "'Sheng yu si' zaiban houji," 31.

The sentimentality of the play fulfills the expectation of a melodrama. The long-lost children, long-held grudges, and dramatic twists of fate are the emotional highlight that attracts the audience. The story is entangled with different social classes, a complicated murder case, a love triangle and arguments about life, affection and fortune. However, *Life and Death* indicates more than a melodramatic story of true or false. It presents the confusion of the younger generation and the human nature in unexpected accidents.

Xu Xu's ambition is to depict three families and their relationships with each other in the first three acts and reach the climax in the fourth. The complicated storylines reveal several sides of the characters in the play. Zhang Qizhai, for example, led a licentious life eight years ago but later became a loving father. Jianxiao, a loving elder brother, becomes a heartless professional killer. Xu Xu acknowledged that expressing such complicated characters in one script creates difficulty for writer and performer alike:

. . . . [I]n this [play], there is no born villain nor born good guy, no completely successful person nor total loser who could be obviously differentiated. However, there are emotional and mental clashes, diverse loves and resentments, and various emotions produced in different situations by many identical thoughts. These clashes and frictions are hard to act out...

.....這裏面並沒有一個現成的壞人，也沒有一個現成的好人，也沒有一個完全成功與完全失敗的人可以在一個舞台面上作明顯的對待。但是其中有情緒的思想的激衝，有許多不同的愛與不同的恨，有許多同樣的思想

在不同的情境中所產生的不同的情緒。要表演這些激衝與摩擦，是一件難事；……¹¹²

At one level, Xu's play criticizes Chinese families in the 1930's and 40's China. He inclines to favor the middle class, represented by Zhang Qizhai and Meidu's family, suggesting his fond recollection of his university days. Kind lady like Meidu is smart, frank and compassionate, despite all the difficulties she's encountered. In contrast, in wealthy and poor families, characters' ethical relationships come across as inharmonious, acrimonious, even morbid. Xu Xu's tragedies *Mother's Portrait* and *The Moon* depicts similar moral conundrums and decadences in upper-class families.

In *Life and Death*, Meidu and Zhang Qizhai achieve happiness through mutual familial support and love. Chen's family, meanwhile, faces devastation because of abnormal romantic intrigues and greed within the family. Things are no better in a poor family. The tragedy of Zhang's family is a product of the broken family and the ruthless society. They neither have money to support their life, nor do they feel the love from others, since they do not have caring relatives at all. The mother Zhang is a representative of a single mother raising two children arduously through the years. "They live in this human world, feel that nothing is reliable, except money."¹¹³

Zhang Jianxiao provides the plays' only link between the family tragedy and a national issue. As he confesses, he is an abnormal product of the military system and an unequal and corrupt society. His misfortune is a warning to a post-May Fourth society.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Xu, *Sheng yu si*, 69.

While the May Fourth movement is generally regarded a monumental event for intellectual revolution that contributed to China's social modernization. The post-May Fourth generation, however, were cynical and pessimistic under endless turmoil and wars.¹¹⁴ Although the May Fourth movement somehow enlightened the masses, and industrialists propelled domestic industry in late 1920s, it did not necessarily bring about a just or improved society. Xu Xu criticized post-May Fourth society implicitly through Jianxiao's destruction: Society is in extreme chaos, and cannot guarantee civil rights. This implicit nationalistic connotation, though not a dominant theme, is developed in *The Moon* and *He Luofu's Death*. In Chapter four, I further explore Xu Xu's distinctive nationalism and its development from Shanghai to Chongqing.

A second layer in *Life and Death*, and the most important to Chinese scholars,¹¹⁵ is the romantic examination of love for three young couples. The question of love, entangled with death and miscarriage of justice is the highlight for academic critics. Generally, Xu Xu praises the love of three young couples of Meidu and Xu Ning, Suqi and Zhongmei, Jianping and Shoubai as being true. Their love resists the lure of wealth

¹¹⁴ Hung Chang-tai. *War and Popular Culture: Resistance in Modern China, 1937-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p. 3.

¹¹⁵ See Pan Jian, "Xuezhe zhi ju: Xu Xu xiju chuanguo de dute fengge (Scholar's Drama: Xu Xu's Distinctive Style of Drama Writing)," *Zhongguo Xiandai Wenxue Yanjiu Congkan* (Modern Chinese Literature Studies), no. 2 (1993). Zhang Yuhua, "Zai zheli hua xushu zhong shentou renwen jingshen de ai: lun Xu Xu xiju de meixue fengge" (Penetrating Humanistic Love in the Philosophical Expression: On the Aesthetic Style of Xu Xu's Drama), *Sichuan xiju* (Sichuan Drama), no. 9 (2015). Liu Xin, "Xu Xu juzuo lun" (On Xu Xu's drama) (Shanghai Theatre Academy, 2005), 16. These papers and theses mainly discuss various types of love in Xu Xu's drama scripts. *Life and Death* is one of the examples, according to Xin Liu, that depict the "eternal love between men and women". As Pan Jian suggests, it's Xu Xu's way to construct his "philosophy of love".

and the pressures of reality. Under the huge impact of death and suspicious crime, Xu Xu stages an intellectual debate of death and love. The expressions of love entangle with both melodramatic conventions and philosophical thoughts. In scene four, Meidu, in order to comfort Zhongmei about Suqi's death, talks about future and time: "Suqi is dead. Everything is over . . . For you at this time, the hope for happiness and ideal is cut off, but your life is continuing."¹¹⁶ When her father Zhang Qizhai regrets about the past miserable life that the whole family has separated for years. Meidu says, "The future is infinite. Only past, past ends now in the present."¹¹⁷ Meidu states her own thoughts about the brevity of human life. After her father announces the surprise news that Zhang Jianping and Zhang Jianxiao are her siblings, Meidu questions fate, which led to a live friend dying and restored dead family members to life. In her confusion, even derangement, she escalates the discussion to a metaphysical level. When Meidu was confused with the unmanageable and unpredictable destiny, she and Shoubai have a serious conversation regarding history and life:

Shoubai: Humans live within history. We understand historical progress.
We advance with history. That is the correct way to live one's life.

Meidu: Yes. Biology tells me to love, so we love; it tells us to eat, so we eat; it tells us to bear children, so we bear children.

Shoubai: But we are human beings. In the history of humanity, if we want the vast majority of people to be happy, we need to fulfill our duty at the historical moment we're born into, so as to propel history forward.

¹¹⁶ Xu, *Sheng yu si*, 112.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 134.

守白：人生在歷史之中，我們瞭解了歷史的演進，我們把握著歷史前進，這就是正確的人生。

美度：是的，生物學叫我戀愛，我們戀愛；叫我們吃飯，我們吃飯；叫我們生孩子我們生孩子。

守白：但是我們是人，我們人類歷史之中，我們要大多數幸福，我們要在所生的歷史上，盡我們的責任，我們要推動歷史。¹¹⁸

Their discussion digresses from a mournful incident to an intellectual argument. Meidu and Shoubai, taking the perspective of all human beings, try to convey optimism and a sense of duty toward the species. A human being's existence is not random, but an organic part to propel historical progress.

Considering the modest length of the script and its intricate plotting, Meidu experiences a rapid see-saw of happiness and sadness. Her philosophical response under this dramatic emotional impact is unusual. Unlike other playwrights such as Chen Baichen and Yang Jiang 楊絳 (1911-2016), who make it their goal to echo and play with reality,¹¹⁹ Xu Xu pursues a philosophical purpose. The conversations between Shoubai and Meidu draw the readers' sympathy away from the plot twists toward a Bergsonian introspection of the ultimate responsibility of a human being within the broad sweep of history.

Except the social and realistic facets, the drama also presents liberal thought among the younger generation. The essential issue in this play, which not merely touches on social crisis, is the individual's spiritual survival in a present that transcends spacial

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 128.

¹¹⁹ Pan, "Xuezhe zhi Ju: Xu Xu xiju chuanguo de dute fengge," 75.

boundaries. These young philosophers take the human being as the prime subject in the progress of history. They judge the individual's abilities and responsibilities by a universal measure. The theoretical discussion in *Life and Death* stretches the theme of the drama from a Chinese domestic tragedy to a universal conundrum of the subjectivity of a mortal human being.

Similar considerations of the individual's ideal existence occur in *Mother's Portrait* and the verse drama *When the Tides Come*. The melodramatic play *Mother's Portrait* is set in a wealthy family, again in a vague "modern China."¹²⁰ The rich business man Li Moqing 李莫卿 has four children, the elder son Zhuoyu 卓榆, daughter Zhuomei 卓梅, two younger sons Zhuowu 卓梧 and Zhuotong 卓桐. After the death of his first wife, Li marries Zhuomei's classmate Cai Xiaojing 蔡曉鏡. Unbeknownst to Li, Cai is the ex-girlfriend of Zhuoyu, who abandoned Xiaojing and went to study painting in France. This fact provokes Cai to marry Li Moqing as a revenge on him. But Zhuoyu and Xiaojing are immediately reconciled with each other after Zhuoyu coming back home in the beginning of Act II. Their adultery is caught by Li Moqing later in a night in Act III. Zhuoyu then leaves the house for the peace of the whole family with no destination in mind, while Xiaojing has already borne his child. Another catalyst of this family is Wang Puyu 王朴羽, the cousin and secret lover of the late mother, and the biological father of these four children. Under his mediation and Cai Xiaojing's financial support, the

¹²⁰ Same as *Life and Death*, there is no specific venue and time setting in the play.

children of the family generally solve their own life problems. Zhuomei refuses her father's order for marrying the wealthy old businessman Shen Kecheng 沈可成. Xiaojing promises to support her and her boyfriend to get married and study arts in Europe. A female secretary lures Zhuowu into a sex trap and asks the Li family for money. Li Moqing refuses to solve the problem with his hard-earned money. But Xiaojing, after listening to Puyu's persuasion, consents to help Zhuowu by diverting the household budget. Eventually, the children feel grateful to Xiaojing's help. Puyu suggests the children to hang Zhuoyu's portrait of Xiaojing as a replacement of the painting of the later mother on the wall. Puyu, taken ill after everything is settled, tells Xiaojing his secret adultery before he dies. All the children, in order to appreciate Puyu's help, call him "father" at the end of his life, not knowing that Puyu is indeed their biological father.

Mother's Portrait reminded readers of Cao Yu's famous melodrama *Thunderstorm* 雷雨 (1933), which was extremely popular in 1930s.¹²¹ The theme of "the emancipation of the individual"¹²² from the oppressive feudal family won audiences' hearts. Fanyì 繁漪, the heroine who commits incest with her stepson, is depicted as a dauntless spirit who

¹²¹ Hu, *Shanghai gudao huaju yanjiu*, 51. According to Hu, *Thunderstorm* had been on stage over 500 times around the country in 1930s. China Traveling Theater Company (CTTC) gained many profits from the play. However, the drama cannot attract audience anymore in 1939, when CTTC went back to Shanghai for the dramatic movement of the Orphan Island 孤島劇運.

¹²² Johnathan Noble, "Cao Yu and *Thunderstorm*," in *The Columbia Companion to Modern East Asian Literature*, ed. Joshua S. Mostow et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 449.

breaks patriarchal institutions. *Thunderstorm* exploits anxiety about patriarchal and feudal mechanisms as well as the liberation of the human spirit in the Chinese context.

Mother's Portrait deals with adultery within a wealthy family in its own way. *1500 Modern Chinese Novels & Plays*, a literary manual conducted by conservative Western missionary in Shanghai in 1940s, criticizes this play as a "very licentious subject."¹²³ Main characters in the play involve in many immoral behaviors. In the play, the adulteries between Puyu and the late mother, the stepmother Xiaojing and Zhuoyu are not presented as sins. Their love is pure. Their efforts for the family finally won them the respect and love from the children. Unlike in *Thunderstorm*, wherein the paternal authority ends with nothing, Puyu and Xiaojing, through their compassion to the family, establish themselves as the legitimate paragons. Their moral defects and those of the orthodox father Moqing, however, disappear in the narrative. It breaks the normal pattern of the absolute good and evil in the concept of melodrama and construct its own ethic codes based on the criteria of love.

Compared to the *Thunderstorm*, *Mother's Portrait* takes a moderate attitude toward the traditional family. The youths' destiny and romantic love are based on a compromise with their father's wealth. Xiaojing and Puyu, who live on Moqing's fortune, perform as an agency between Moqing and the youth. They acquire money from this

¹²³ Jos. Schyns, Yen-sheng Chao, and Heuen-lin Su, *1500 Modern Chinese Novels & Plays*, Scheut Editions. Series I, Critical and Literary Studies 3 (Peiping: Catholic University Press, 1948), 400.

businessman in order to help the younger generation to gain their happiness. Xu Xu defines Xiaojing's situation as a kind of sacrifice for the family and the baby she bears. He values the conflict between personal desire and "sacrifice for the decedents" as the "destiny of human being" and even the "destiny of living beings."¹²⁴ Thus, while devoted to the prevalent May Fourth issue of youth breaking with their traditional families in China¹²⁵ he chose to reconcile them with their problematic and unsupportive family by an easy rearrangement of the hegemony in domestic politics.

Xu Xu's plays make an argument about human nature that constitutes a significant characteristic for his individualism. In these tragedies, he never restricts his themes to China. The protagonists in his plays are eligible to reach their own spiritual and universal free will rather than a forced decision under the pressure of nationalism.

In 1939, Xu Xu got involved into an argument with left-wing writers about Individualism in China. In the debate about aesthetics and "eight-legged resistance essays" 抗戰八股文 with the left-wing writer Baren 巴人 (aka Wang Renshu 王任叔, 1901-72), Baren claimed in his "Launching a Struggle against Individualism in the Field of Arts" 展開文藝領域中反個人主義的鬥爭 (1939) that Xu Xu's poem "Personal

¹²⁴ Xu Xu, *Muqin de xiaoxiang* (Mother's Portrait) (Hong Kong: Yechuang shuwu, 1950), 97.

¹²⁵ During the early days in Republican Era, "Breaking up with the traditional family" is an important topic in many writings. Female writers such as Lu Yin 廬隱 (1898-1934), Ding Ling 丁玲 (1904-86) and Bing Xin 冰心 (1900-99) all had such experience to flee from their families. Hu Shi's 胡適 (1891-1962) drama script *The Main Event of One's Life* 終生大事 (1919), a adapted play based on Ibsen's *Nora*, and Lu Xun's "Regret for the Past" 傷逝 (1925) all discuss the similar topic.

Matters" 私事 (1939) reveals "a tendency to individualism, the bastard of barefaced nihilism." This tendency, he said, would "eliminate the fighting spirit of thousands of revolutionaries."¹²⁶ Baren's radical criticism indicts Xu Xu's inclination to express excessive personal feelings and focuses one individual's life and thoughts in his creations. Many year later, in his *Return to Individualism and Liberalism* 回到個人主義與自由主義 (1957), Xu Xu contended that his individualism is connected to the perspective of "human" rather than "I" or ego.¹²⁷ The origin of individuals is based on human connections.¹²⁸

A more obvious example of Xu Xu's Individualism is the verse drama *When the Tides Come*, a Shakespearean tragedy set in the fictional Dew-light Village 露光鄉. The poetic language of this verse drama gives the play the ambiance of a folk tale. The play begins and ends with four witches singing a prophecy, reminiscent of scenes from *Macbeth*:

You don't know that a lighthouse is the humanity's civilization, 你不知道燈塔
是人間的文明,

The moon is nature's illumination, 月亮是自然的光明,

Therein, the clever bustle about, 聰敏的在那中間煩忙,

While the foolish therein go crazy. 愚蠢的在那裏面發狂。¹²⁹

¹²⁶ See Wu and Wang, *Woxin panghuang: Xu Xu zhuan*, 149.

¹²⁷ Dongfang, *Huidao geren zhuyi yu ziyou zhuyi*, 19.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 22.

¹²⁹ Xu Xu, *Chao Lai de Shihou* (When Tides Come) in *Xu Xu Quanjì* (Taipei: Cheng Chung Book Company, 1980), 420.

The setting and the witches' stylistic poetic languages imperceptibly help to keep the psychological distance from readers' daily life. Though witches intensify the fantastical atmosphere, the plot is a rather *Romeo-and-Juliet* style romantic tragedy combined with anxiety about modern technology as contrasted with traditional nature worship. The engineer, in order to build the lighthouse for the Dew-light village, where everyone worships the natural light of the moon, raises funds from the landlord by marrying his daughter Yuanyin 緣茵 to landlord's son Zhang Fubai 張福白. Jue'an 覺岸, Yuanyin's lover and the traveler, come to the village for the girl. However, for protesting against higher tax for building the lighthouse, he is captured by the police. Yuanyin, not knowing whether Jue'an is dead or alive, jumps into the sea in the first night when the lighthouse starts working and before her wedding ceremony with Zhang Fubai. The lovelorn Jue'an, when he later learns what happened, also commits suicide.

The play argues that modernization usually is accompanied by exploitation of technology and labor. "Science is no more than the slave of the fortune,"¹³⁰ the engineer in the play confesses. The evils of capital and science highlight the will of the individuals, who are willing to "be busy for love, be bitter for love, and die for love."¹³¹

This play totally breaks away from nationalistic concerns and concrete settings of time and space. The imaginary, mysterious Dew-light village makes the question of

¹³⁰ Xu Xu, "Chao lai de shihou" (When the Tides Come) in *Xu Xu quanji* (Taipei: Cheng Chung Book Company, 1980), 514.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 70.

identity purposefully ambiguous. In this made-up time and space, Xu Xu criticizes the evils of modernization and his main characters, Yuanyin and Jue'an, represent the slim hopes of humanity.

In these three plays, Xu Xu avoids any mention, implicit or explicit, of the ongoing resistance war. He concentrates on depiction of domestic issues and the depressing lives of youths. The younger generation is usually confused and at a loss when facing difficulties. While Jianxiao's fate in *Life and Death* alludes to the reality of social unrest and military strife in Republican China, other problems are concerned more with the challenges faces by a younger generation in a nation marching towards modernity.

In these plays, Xu Xu seeks his own universal solution for young people's conundrums. They present not merely reality after the May Fourth Movement, but also an interrogation of how a human is to face life's unpredictability. Xu Xu's individualistic answer apparently points to love and one's responsibility as a human being as prime motivators within the *long durée* of history. Though the artistic quality of the plays is not superior, this is the approach and contents Xu Xu uses to win empathy from a wide range of readers and audiences within and even out side the China.

3.4 The Failure of Xu Xu's Dramas on the Wartime Stage

Xu Xu was not a member of a theater company after 1938, so he did not participate in any professional spoken drama production during the remainder of the war. His plays

were published in book form, but rarely performed. Several records exist about stage performances by amateur troupes, but all of the attempts seem to have failed because of the poor qualities of the performances. There was seldom public criticism about those performances in newspapers. Xu Xu, too, was dissatisfied about all the troupes' performances on stage.

The Moon was performed on stage by St. John's drama society in 1939. Huang Jiade, an alumnus of St. John University in Shanghai, introduced Xu Xu's drama to the school drama society. Before the performance, Xu Xu wrote an article in *Sino-US Daily* to support the play. "The St. John's Drama Club is an historic drama club. I believe the play won't fail. It is said that the director is an experienced practitioner in the field, so if there is going to be any failure, the fault remains with my drama scripts."¹³² However, the awful performance seems to have enraged Xu Xu. Two years later, in his epilogue for the revised play *Moonlight Sonata*, Xu Xu reminded readers about the performance and blamed the director for his "idiocy and ignorance" that wasted the actors's talents.¹³³

In January 16th 1941, the newly established amateurs' group Shanghai Artistic Drama Society 文藝社, which aimed to "perform difficult artistic plays", performed Xu Xu's *Life and Death* as their debut, saying that it had "earned a reputation for a strict structure and profound implication." This "initial experiment" would "sound out

¹³² Xu, "Cong Yueliang chansheng tan qi."

¹³³ Xu Xu, *Yue Guang Qu* (Moonlight Sonata) (Shanghai: Yechuang shuwu, 1941), 158.

audience's attitude toward difficult plays."¹³⁴ Xu Xu's verse drama *When the Tides Come* appeared first on their list of planned future productions. Four days after the debut, however, Xu Xu wrote a long epilogue for a new edition of *Life and Death*, in which he pondered the relationship between his script and the recent terrible performance on stage. His scripts, he said, are based on his own interests rather than on "the limitation of directors and audiences' appreciation at the time."¹³⁵ As a result, his works usually have a complicated structure and emotional shifts. Professional troupes, he said, simply considered his works lacking distinct dramatic conflicts, while the actors lacked skill.¹³⁶ He appreciated that the director tried his best to ignite the audience's empathy, but the result was unsatisfactory. This is why, Xu Xu said, he refused most requests to produce his plays for the stage. Readers could read the scripts to themselves or their acquaintances when they are lonely or in pain.¹³⁷

In March of the same year, however, another advertisement for a production of Xu Xu's comedy "Guffaw of the Orphan Island" 孤島的狂笑 (1941) was published in *Shen Bao*.¹³⁸ The former Artistic Drama Society, reorganized as the China Artistic Drama Association 中國文藝戲劇協會, was going to perform the play in Shanghai's Russian

¹³⁴ "'Wenju' yan 'Sheng yu si'" (Artistic Drama Society will perform *Life and Death*), *Shen Bao*, January 11, 1941, sec. 14.

¹³⁵ Xu Xu, "'Sheng yu si' zaiban houji" (Postscript of Reprint of *Life and Death*), *Yuzhoufeng yikan*, no. 40 (1941): 31.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 31.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ "'Gudao de kuangxiao'" ("Guffaw of the Orphan Island"), *Shen Bao*, March 22, 1941, sec. 11.

Arts Theatre 俄國藝術劇院 on March 29th. They introduced it as a hilarious play that "makes every efforts to satirize, depict, tease and ridicule every facet of life in the Orphan Island."¹³⁹ Xu Xu reluctantly agreed to provide the drama script because of their passion for the stage.¹⁴⁰ The result, however, was disappointing. And the troupe eventually gave up the comedy because of inadequate preparation and substituted *Life and Death*. Xu Xu was irritated and embarrassed. He thought the performance of his sarcastic comedy should convey "harsh satire and sorrows for loneliness,"¹⁴¹ Yet all possible failures for a comedy—to become "slippery, coarse and insipid"—happened in rehearsal.¹⁴²

Xu Xu concluded that his drama scripts were too complicated for amateurs. Directors and actors, he felt, rarely represented the emotion of his scripts properly. Their arbitrary interpretations of the characters jeopardized his works by distorting their meaning. Xu Xu came to believe that his drama scripts could only be fully appreciated by readers. A stage performance, for Xu Xu, represented only one "edition" of his works,¹⁴³ and not the most important one. Though he wrote scripts to convey his theatrical theories, Xu Xu did not tailor his scripts to the needs of the stage. His main concern was literary.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Xu Xu, "Wo de 'Gudao de kuangxiao'" (My "Guffaw of the Orphan Island"), *Sino-US Daily*, March 26, 1941, sec. 8. He wrote that he deliberately provided a comedy script rather than other serious multi-act plays because he thought the director wouldn't like comedy. It never occurred to him that the director would accept "Guffaw of the Orphan Island" and preform it in such a farcical way.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Xu Xu, *Gudao de Kuangxiao* (Guffaw of the Orphan Island) (Shanghai: Yechuang shuwu, 1941), 96.

¹⁴³ See William Worthen, *Drama: Between Poetry and Performance* (Chichester; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 3. Worthen talks about the paradigm of the understanding of drama in print culture, using examples from Shakespeare.

4 Dedication to Individual Survival:

Revising Plays between Shanghai and Chongqing

Xu Xu moved from Shanghai to Chongqing in 1942. The shift in geographical and political environment affected his writing and book publishing. Xu Xu encountered in Chongqing an established literary order and hierarchy characterized by ideological restrictions and mandatory patriotism. I argue, however, that audience needs changed in the hinterland between 1938 and 1942, and that this affected writers like Xu Xu. Playwrights lived under difficult circumstances that led them to cast doubts on the existing canon of wartime stage plays. As the war progressed, writers and playwrights started to pay attention to a wider variety of plays and other literary works. While working with the hinterland's literary establishment, Xu Xu preserved his pursuit of cosmopolitan ideas under the existing political cover. By 1943, his efforts had won him fame nation wide. His success reveals that commercial literary culture in Chongqing between 1942 and 1944 was tolerant of diverse literary productions and had an appetite for literary spectacle. Yet Xu's success belies the fragility of his brand of cosmopolitan thought and anticipates its coming eclipse in China.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴ The Communist party also embraced a cosmopolitan character in its early years. The establishment of the party was under a cosmopolitan scenario in Shanghai. During the Yan'an period, the Rectification Movement, aiming at signifying Marxism-Leninism, "suppressed the globalizing and internationalizing strain in communism." After 1949, the PRC government had experienced being isolated in the world, while trying to unify the Asian, Africa, Latin America and other Communist countries. It pursued a demise of the Communist globalization and its own brand of cosmopolitanism to engage into the world politics. See Hans J. Van de Ven, "War, Cosmopolitanism, and Authority: Mao from 1937 to 1956," in *A Critical Introduction to Mao*, ed. Timothy Cheek (New York: Cambridge

4.1 The Changing Cultural Atmosphere of the "Greater Rear Area", 1938-44

Conditions in Shanghai deteriorated rapidly after Pearl Harbor. Japan occupied the French concession and international settlement on December 8, 1941, and this ended the precarious balance of the "Orphan Island." The Japanese closed the *West Wind* society, saying it was "anti-Japanese," and confiscated more than one hundred thousand magazines and books from storage. This forced the editors to stop publication, and they moved to Guilin and then Chongqing.¹⁴⁵ As a major *West Wind* writer, Xu Xu, in early 1942, decided to flee to Guilin with the assistance of the World Travel Service 世界旅行社. The journey was full of dangers and difficulties, but Xu Xu arrived at a relatively safe place in the Nationalist-controlled region.

How did Xu Xu continue his writing career in this new, highly nationalistic region? The different political limitations and ideological imperatives of occupied Shanghai and the Nationalist wartime capital of Chongqing made a huge difference to their respective literatures. Xu Xu was to find his works, and even his identity, challenged in the Nationalist-controlled hinterland.

The literary atmosphere of the "Greater Rear Area," as it was called, did not oppose all change. Playwrights' attitude towards the imperative to produce nationalistic propaganda changed with military disappointments, literary failures, market chaos and

University Press, 2010), 87–109.

¹⁴⁵ Huang Jiade, "Yi Xifeng" (In Memory of Xifeng), *Chuban shiliao* (Historical materials of Publishing) 1 (1990): 67.

harsh living circumstances. By 1942, Chongqing had undergone five years of construction and hardship. It was a place in flux.

Since 1938, writers and intellectuals with left or neutral political intentions maintained a cultural apparatus linking the major cities of Wuhan, Chongqing and Guilin. The All-China Resistance Association of Writers and Artists 中華全國文藝界抗敵協會 was established in Wuhan on March 27th, 1938. More than fifty artists attended the inaugural celebration.¹⁴⁶ Ninety-seven founding members are listed with the founding document of the organization dated April 1, 1938.¹⁴⁷ Members pledged their pens to anti-Japanese resistance and claimed that literary activities in pursuit of pure artistic value were intolerable. Artists and writers were responsible to support the sacred mission of promoting national salvation and social welfare.

Organizational unity, at least on paper, was a new arrangement for artists in the hinterland. Lao She, a major contributor for the Analects group, devoted himself to cultural mobilization of the nation and the masses. As “a major novelist respected across the political spectrum,”¹⁴⁸ he became the Association’s factual leader¹⁴⁹. Lao She was

¹⁴⁶ Wen Tianxing, Wang Daming, and Liao Quanjing, eds., *Zhonghua Quanguo Wenyi Jie Kangdi Xiehui Ziliao Huibian* (The Selective Materials for the All-China Resistance Association of Writers and Artists) (Chengdu: Sichuan sheng shehui kexueyuan chubanshe, 1983), 22. The article was initially published in *Xinhua Daily* on Mar 28, 1938.

¹⁴⁷ “Zhonghua Quanguo Wenyi Jie Kangdi Xiehui Faqi Qu” (On the establishment of the All-China Resistance Association of Writers and Artists), *Wenyi Yuekan* (Arts Monthly) 1, no. 9 (1938): 183–84.

¹⁴⁸ Charles A. Laughlin, “The All-China Resistance Association of Writers and Artists,” in *Literary Societies of Republican China*, ed. Michel Hockx and Kirk A. Denton (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008), 384.

concerned with how best to use literature to propagandize to the masses. Promoting the slogans "new wine in old bottles" 舊瓶裝新酒¹⁵⁰ and "send literature down to the countryside, and into the army", he encouraged and organized writers to write under the themes of social mobilization.¹⁵¹ He himself produced five plays, two novels, more than a dozen short stories and many critical essays over the course of the war, thereby enhancing his national prominence.¹⁵² His example demonstrates that waging literary battle was a key route for writers seeking a decent position in the early wartime hinterland.

Xu Xu made contact with Lao She half year after he went to Chongqing but found him, he recalled, "arrogent" and "insincere." Lao She asked about neither the situation in occupied Shanghai nor Xu's journey to Chongqing. Xu Xu wrote in 1969 that "he persistently responded in a prefunctionary manner, and sometimes teased the cat at his side."¹⁵³ Tao Kangde, an editor familiar with Lao She from Shanghai, had asked Xu Xu to ask Lao She about the way to help him escaping to Chongqing. However, in Xu's account, Lao She tried to disengage himself with his Shanghai past.¹⁵⁴ The meeting left

¹⁴⁹ According to Charles Laughlin, there is no official "chairman" or "general secretary". See Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ "New wine in old bottles" is the slogan Lao She promoted when he arrived Wuhan in the first place. Encouraged by Tian Han, who adapted historical plays into spoken drama, Lao She tried to compose new contents to the traditional Guci (鼓詞) and plays.

¹⁵¹ Stephen MacKinnon, *Wuhan, 1938* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 73.

¹⁵² Ibid., 74.

¹⁵³ Xu Xu, *Nian ren yi shi: Xu Xu yiwen xuan*, 34.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 34–35.

Xu Xu with an unpleasant impression of this lofty writer.

The opposite figure is Liang Shiqiu, a liberal intellectual who lost his position as the chief editor of the supplement of *Central Daily* 中央日報. He announced his ideologically-open editorial policy in the initial supplement of *Central Daily* in December 1938:

Materials about the resistance are most welcome. However, materials unrelated to anti-Japanese resistance are also good. So long as they are realistic and read well, there is no need to impose a “resistance” theme. As for “eight-legged resistance essays,” those benefit no one.

與抗戰有關的材料，我們最為歡迎，但是與抗戰無關的材料，只要真實流暢，也是好的，不必勉強把抗戰截搭上去，至於空洞的“抗戰八股”，那是對誰都沒有益處的。¹⁵⁵

Five days after this announcement was published, Kong Luosun 孔羅荪 (1912 - 96), a young editor and writer for *Arts of Resistance* 抗戰文藝, rebutted Liang, saying that writers cannot contribute any realistic article without connection with the resistance.¹⁵⁶

Over the next several months, Guo Moruo 郭沫若 (1892-1978), Shen Congwen 沈從文 (1902-88), Zhang Tianyi 張天翼 (1906-85), members from the All-China Resistance Association of Writers and Artists and other writers in different regions of China produced more than thirty articles on the subject, mostly criticizing Liang Shiqiu's position.¹⁵⁷ After approximately five months of debate, in April 1939, Liang Shiqiu

¹⁵⁵ Shiqiu Liang, “Fukan yu wo” (Supplement and Me) in *Liang Shiqiu wenxue huiyilu* (Liang Shiqiu's Literary Recollection), ed. Zishan Chen (Changsha: Yue lu shushe, 1989), 48–9.

¹⁵⁶ Luo's article was published on *Dagong Bao* in May 5th 1939. See *Ibid.*, 49.

¹⁵⁷ Kan Liang, “Chinese Intellectuals in the War: Chongqing, 1937-1945” (Ph.D., Yale

resigned his editorship.

Xu Xu's notion of literature at the time was similar to Liang's. While Liang was justifying his announcement in Chongqing in 1939, Xu Xu participated from Shanghai. His argument with Baren, mentioned in the previous chapter, responded to Liang Shiqiu's literary argument in Chongqing. The dispute of unified propaganda vs. liberalism and individualism between Xu Xu and Baren, not like the one in Chongqing, was merely discussed in the literary circle in Shanghai. Xu Xu did not encounter strong political pressure as did Liang. He insisted his own liberal opinions and kept his Individualistic thoughts in his articles and literary practice in Shanghai till 1942.

Compared to Liang Shiqiu, who was forced to resign his position, Xu Xu stayed soundly in Shanghai as a writer enjoying his reputation. Two different outcomes of these two liberal intellectuals indicate the huge ideological difference between two geographical locations in 1939. Liang Shiqiu's resignation implies the trouble liberal intellectuals could encounter in the hinterland.

However, time changed everything rapidly during wartime. The endless battles and casualties reshaped territories, national finances, and morale. The patriotic atmosphere in interior was declining after years of expectation and efforts. The situation in China was not getting better. On the contrast, As Diana Lary points out, "the war had gone beyond a stalemate, beyond stagnation, into a permanent, dragging nightmare."¹⁵⁸

University, 1995), 125.

¹⁵⁸ Diana Lary, *The Chinese People at War: Human Suffering and Social Transformation*,

In the artistic circle, after years of mobilization and promotion, writers had not seen any promising future, which made them reconsider their purpose and strategy of literary creation.

On the symposium of "Expectations for Literary Trend in 1941," Lao She confessed that early efforts to popularize literature in the interior territories were insufficient. "New wine in the old bottles" is a superficial method to incorporate the public into the resistance career at the initial stage of the war. After years of resistance, artists should focus on arts rather than empty propaganda.¹⁵⁹ The theme of this symposium was no longer the expression of resistance in the hinterland. As Yiqun (aka. Ye Yiqun 葉以羣, 1911-66) contended, having undergone the first phase of the anti-Japanese war with passion and impulse, writers now found that old forms and formulaic writing style could not support the expression of the new reality and life under the shadow of the long-term resistance. Under the unchanged banner of realism, Ge Yihong 葛一虹 (1913-2005) requested the writers to observe more of the complex aspects of real life. As a conclusion of the symposium, Guo Moruo summarized four new tendencies of Chinese drama in 1941: 1) Writers have changed their writing attitude. They start to observe the situation rationally and calmly. 2) The objects are not simply the positive aspects of the war. The range of creations is wider than before. 3) Writers dare to

1937-1945 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 113.

¹⁵⁹ "Yi jiu si yi nian wenxue quxiang de zhanwang" (Expectations for Literary Trend in 1941), *Kangzhan wenyi* (Arts of Resistance) 7, no. 1 (1941): 3.

approach, acknowledge and respect the new reality, since new people and new realities have emerged in these three years. 4) Writers have figured out that the content is as same important as the form. They begin to explore the new artistic style.¹⁶⁰

In the drama circle, the educational and patriotic function is still the most significant theme of the performances. However, the dramatists had realized defects in their creations. *Drama Age* 戲劇春秋 (1940-42) was a magazine Tian Han established in Guilin in response to the urgent needs of left-wing young practitioners, who could not find a non-KMT magazine to discuss the drama.¹⁶¹ In the inaugural statement on first issue of the *Drama Age* 戲劇春秋 (1940-42), Tian Han acknowledges playwrights' predicament. The most crucial problem at this phase of the anti-Japanese resistance is the dearth of plays accurately reflecting wartime reality.¹⁶² This magazine, though highlights the theme of anti-Japanese resistance as usual, inclines to introduce performing techniques, theories and new drama scripts. In this magazine, dramatists began to reflect upon essential questions about the literature and performance rather than the political appeals.

In 1943, *Drama Monthly* 戲劇月報 (1943-44) was founded in Chongqing by Chen Baichen, Cao Yu and some active playwrights there. As a major dramatic magazine

¹⁶⁰ For details, see "Yi jiu si yi nian wenxue quxiang de zhanwang (Expectations for Literary Trend in 1941)," *Kangzhan wenyi* (Resistance Literature) 7, no. 1 (1941): 3-11.

¹⁶¹ Xuan Du, *Xiju Chunqiu* (Comrade Tian Han and *Drama Age*)," *Xiju Yishu* (Drama Arts), no. Z1 (1979): 132.

¹⁶² Han Tian, "Fa kan ci" (Inaugural Statement), *Xiju chunqiu* (Drama age) 1, no. 1 (November 1940): 1.

in late anti-Japanese war period, it features theatrical articles, original play scripts and translations of foreign drama from leading playwrights, such as Wu Zuguang 吳祖光 (1917-2003), Xia Yan 夏衍 (1900-95), Hong Shen and Guo Moruo. *Drama Monthly*, unlike *Drama Age*, focuses more on artistic exploration, giving less space to anti-Japanese resistance. In this platform for professional dramatic practitioners, famous dramatists like Hong Shen and Chen Baichen wrote about their experience of directing, acting or writing; editors translated Morton Eustis, Henry Irving and Stanislavski's theories of performance. The magazine also concerned itself with the living conditions of artists. For example, in the second issue, the magazine dedicate a column to the issue of "performance rate" 上演稅, which was the primary income for playwrights. Some troupes at the time preformed plays without paying playwright commission; some others merely refused to pay the portion. Since there was no law to protect playwrights' benefit, playwrights' own appeals on magazines had became a campaign during early 1943 to 1944. In fact, the hard living condition had already affected writers for a long time. The famous playwright Hong Shen made a failed suicide attempt with his wife in 1941 due to financial difficulties.¹⁶³ The incident aroused broad attentions about the severe financial

¹⁶³ Except the financial problems, another explanation of Hong Shen's suicide related to the political situation in Chongqing. After Wannan Incident 皖南事變, the Communist started to arrange left-wing intellectuals retreat to Yan'an. However, Hong Shen was not on the list. He was thus feeling depressed, which led to his suicide. See Qian Hong, *Zhongguo huaju dianying xianqu Hong Shen: lishi biannian ji* (Pioneer of Chinese Spoken Drama and Film Hong Shen: Chronology) (Taipei: Showwe Information Co., Ltd., 2011), 198–201.

situation in the hinterland.¹⁶⁴ Yet in 1943, playwrights were still living in straitened circumstances.

Meanwhile, the magazine also publishes new play scripts. Wu Zuguang's *The Latecomer in the Snow* 風雪夜歸人 (1943) is a noteworthy. The story of the play echoes the popular fiction *Begonia* 秋海棠 (1941) by Qin Shouou 秦瘦鷗 (1908 - 93) written in Shanghai.¹⁶⁵ Wu Zuguang leads the audience back to the initial years in Republican China and the romance of a dan 旦 (female impersonator) actor Wei Liansheng 魏蓮生. Unlike Qin Shouou, who implies the depressing destiny of the country by using the metaphor of *Begonia*,¹⁶⁶ Wu Zuguang does not intend to connect this play with nationalism. Instead, He states in his postscript that this play is derived from his memory of a servant boy Little Feng 小馮 and a late dan actor Wei Shenglian 魏盛蓮. What he wants to convey to the audience is how good people suffer in the realities. Wu Zuguang confesses that choosing this title is just because "the poem suits the sentiment." He then touches a little on the reality implicitly that people still live in the cold winter waiting for

¹⁶⁴ See Ji'ao, "Hong Shen zisha" (Hong Shen Attempted Suicide), *Yuzhoufeng yikan* (Cosmic Wind II), no. 42 (1941): 1. Zeming, "Hong Shen de zisha" (Hong Shen's Suicide), *Wenxin* (Literary Heart) 3, no. 3 (1941): 159–61. The poet Zang Kejia wrote a poem about the incident. See Zang Kejia Zang, "Zuihou de fengci: gan Hong Shen zisha" (The Last Satire: Hong Shen Attempted Suicide), *Gaijin* (The Improvement) 5, no. 9 (1941): 365–68.

¹⁶⁵ *Begonia* tells the story about the famous dan actor Qiu Haitang's love romance with the concubine of a good liver. The romance ends in tragedy. Qiu leaves the city with his daughter and a scar on face. Years later, his daughter becomes an actress on the stage. The concubine meets the daughter. However, in the end, they find Qiu Haitang died alone in the room. *The Latecomer in the Snow* is similar with *Begonia*. However, Wei does not have children with the concubine.

¹⁶⁶ The pattern of China in Republican era looks like the leaf of *Begonia*.

some comers in the dark night.¹⁶⁷ David Der-wei Wang points out that the gender of dan actors "constitutes a sexual sham in the sense that cannibals masquerade as civilized, and madmen pretend to be rational."¹⁶⁸ This symbol, which is way more subtle and subconscious in the collective ideology of the nation, represents a tolerant atmosphere in the hinterland after years of mandatory propaganda.

The major publications in Chongqing reveal the tendency that artists shift the focus from the consistent resistance to the artistic creation and the life in the presence. The unsatisfying living condition in the hinterland aroused writers' panic and skepticism towards their career. After 1940, writers reflected their works in the past and revised the goal of literature. Plays like *The Latecomer in the Snow* reveal a broader spectrum of the themes writers could be freely concerned with. The literary environment became more tolerant in 1942 than what in 1938 in the sense that writers could express a lot more themes other than the war. Though nationalism is still relevant, there reinforces certain recognition for diverse and artistic works.

4.2 "Return from Shanghai": Xu Xu's Self-reinvention in the Hinterland

Xu Xu left Shanghai on May 3rd, and finally arrived Guilin in early June. He recorded stories from the journey in the essay "Return from Shanghai" 從上海歸來, which was

¹⁶⁷ Wu Zuguang, "Ji 'Fengxue ye gui ren'" (On *The Latecomer in the Snow*), *Xiju yuebao* 1, no. 2 (1943): 71.

¹⁶⁸ David Der-wei Wang, "Popular Literature and National Representation: The Gender and Genre Politics of Begonia," in *Rethinking Chinese Popular Culture: Cannibalizations of the Canon*, ed. Carlos Rojas and Eileen Cheng-yin Chow (London; New York: Routledge, 2009), 209.

published both in the Chongqing magazine *Modern Life* 時代生活 (1943-46), established by Zhou Xin 周新 and Qian Nengxin 錢能欣,¹⁶⁹ and the Guilin-based magazine *Literary Creation* 文學創作 (1942-44), edited by Xiong Foxi 熊佛西 (1900-65).¹⁷⁰

The title "Return from Shanghai" suggests Xu Xu's intention to break with Shanghai, a cosmopolis suppressed by the Japanese for years. Xu Xu was eager to shed the label of "Shanghai writer" and the image of him as a bourgeoisie literatus from an enemy-occupied city. People who had chosen to stay in Shanghai, to those in the hinterland, had "an odour of cowardice," and long after the war, many people kept silent about their decision to stay put.¹⁷¹ As a writer who had remained in "Orphan Island" for four years, Xu Xu likely felt compelled to clear himself of the opprobrium when he arrived in Nationalist territory.

Xu Xu's essay describes in detail the Japanese invasion of "Orphan Island" Shanghai and its subsequent desolation. After December 8th, Xu Xu said, he stopped publishing and refused every request to stage his plays. As to why he wished to go to the hinterland, it was not that he believed that Chongqing needed his talent, as he "declares

¹⁶⁹ See issues 1-3 (1943) of *Modern Life*.

¹⁷⁰ See issues 4-5 (1943) of *Literary Creation*. According to Xu Xu, he gave the article to Xiong Foxi since Xiong and other editors were requesting submissions to their new magazine, but he later found that *Literary Creation* hadn't published the article, so he gave it to Zhou Xin of *Modern Life*, which in the end result in duplicate publication. See Xu Xu, "‘Cong Shanghai guilai’ houji" (Postscript of "Return from Shanghai"), in *She yi ji* (Collection of Snake Skin) (Shanghai: Yechuang shuwu, 1948), 329.

¹⁷¹ Lary, *The Chinese People at War*, 141.

frankly": "I wanted the freedom to breathe."¹⁷² The declaration mentions nothing of optimism or a desire to make a patriotic contribution, just an individual's desire for a space for free expression.

Xu Xu did not disguise his disappointment for life in Quilin. He depicted himself and some friends who had arrived earlier as "wandering ghosts" 遊魂. He describes his struggles to fit into the existing hierarchy of the hinterland's literary environment:

... The strange thing is that some people treat me like a fruit tree. They give me little cheap fertilizer and wait to pick my fresh fruits. But I can't blossom on a garbage hump, and this disappoints them. Other people treat me like tinder. They think I carry fire to set everywhere ablaze to see how much I can illuminate myself. So they want to extinguish the spark before it causes a conflagration.

……但是奇怪的是有人把我當作果子樹，願意給我一點賤價的肥料，等待採我新鮮的果子，但是我在垃圾堆上竟連花都開不出來，這是使他們很失望的。還有人把我當作火種，以為我是帶著火預備到各處燒燒，想看看自己的光亮的人，所以要趁尚未燎原之前，將這星星之火撲滅。¹⁷³

These words reveal an insecure state of mind. To Xu Xu, people considered him to be either a disappointing literary producer or an unwelcome antagonist. I believe Xu Xu's insecurity is linked to his cosmopolitan self-identity. A writer escaping from Shanghai should bring both crisis and opportunity. His essay suggests that if his efforts bear the types of fruit people want, he may get praise, but if he asserts his own opinions, he'll be destroyed.

¹⁷² Xu Xu, "Cong Shanghai guilai" (Return from Shanghai), *Shidai shenghuo* (Time and Life) 1, no. 1 (1943): 56.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 61.

Xu Xu encountered financial, as well as political, problems. Friends told him that a bookseller had reprinted one of his books without authorization. Ironically, these unauthorized books had made the pirate rich and he enjoyed a more comfortable life than the authors.¹⁷⁴ The story implies both that the Guiling book market was chaotic and, interestingly, that Xu Xu had already enjoyed a reputation in the hinterland. Later in 1942, Xu Xu contacted several bookstores and successfully restored his *Sansi Pavilion Book Series* in Chengdu.

In his essay, Xu Xu does not respond to the patriotic necessity in Chongqing. Instead, he claims: "What I pursue is a life of loyalty. Only by living a loyal life can I work as I see fit; and only if I can work as I see fit can I live life with peace of mind."¹⁷⁵ Xu Xu here means loyalty not to any revolutionary career or to the motherland, but to life itself. Loyalty to life rather than the nation is an implicit declaration of liberal values.

According to Liu Wen, Xu Xu's works' popularity in the hinterland led someone to harshly criticize them in *Journal Age* 書報春秋, and this in turn resulted in his emotional essay.¹⁷⁶ Later, in a "Postscript of 'Return from Shanghai'" (1943), Xu said that the popularity of his Sansi Pavilion book was criticized for being part of "the Windy school" 風派, a sarcastic reference to frivolous writers for popular magazines whose

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Liu Wen, "Tongguo fengsuoxian de yangchang caizi: Xu Xu sanji zhi yi" (Cosmopolitan Talent Passing the Seal: One of the Notes for Xu Xu), *Yuanfeng* (Distant Wind), no. 3 (1947): 48.

names usually ended with the character for Wind, "feng" 風.¹⁷⁷ Xu Xu refuted the allegation by asserting his patriotic identity in Shanghai. Under the pressure of fierce accusation, Xu Xu restates that his liberal position is harmless:

"I returned from Shanghai, and completely responded the call of the nation. Thousands of rivers flow from the same origin; thousands of leaves grow from the same root. I had not established a school in the past, nor am I different now. . ." ¹⁷⁸ Xu Xu evidently wanted to present himself as an ordinary writer.

A different version of "Return from Shanghai" appearing in the book version of *Return from Shanghai* (1944) begins with a dedicatory poem that expresses his awkward situation in the hinterland.¹⁷⁹ Its pervading tone is of stress and disappointment:

Getting out of hell 我從地獄裏出來，
I thought I could sneak into heaven 本想溜到天堂，
Yet I wander in the human realm 但我在人間流落，
Listening to songs from the east ——聽東面歌唱，
Listening to songs from the west ——聽西面歌唱。

"Hell" is a metaphor for occupied Shanghai. He relates how, having escaped from Shanghai, the fallen city after Japanese invasion, he did not arrive the wonderland he had expected. Instead, he struggles to speak but eventually loses his own voice:

I start to learn 我開始想學，
But I'm no parrot 但我不是鸚鵡，

¹⁷⁷ For example, Xu Xu wrote for *West Wind Monthly* and *Cosmic Wind*. In Chongqing, he edited another series books under the name of style 作風 (*zuofeng*).

¹⁷⁸ Xu, "'Cong Shanghai guilai' houji," 330.

¹⁷⁹ Xu Xu, *Cong Shanghai guilai* (Return from Shanghai) (Chongqing: Xinsheng tushu wenju gongsi, 1944), 1-3.

not so clever or glib-tongued as he 沒有他聰敏，伶俐，
who endlessly regurgitates the words of human beings 會把人類的話語反復噉
嚙。

So I raise my voice in aimless song 於是我提高嗓子瞎唱，
Singing of dawnlight crawling in through night's window 唱晨曦爬進了夜窗。
Singing of the moon waxing and waning 唱月圓月缺，
Singing of fireflies simulating starlight 唱螢火蟲冒充星光。

But now I've become a mute 但如今我變成啞子，
want to sing again but cannot 想再唱已不成事，
I am but a silent spider 我只是一直沈默的蜘蛛，
rushing to spin my thread in the east——趕到東頭吐絲，
rushing to spin my thread in the west ——趕到西頭吐絲。

The poem records Xu Xu's failed efforts to join hinterland discourse. He was not capable of mimicking "words of human beings," supposedly the mainstream propaganda, as what the "parrot" can do, as well as learning the proper way to talk and write. The poem uses imagery from the natural world—dawnlight, moon and starlight, as romantic metaphors to convey his willingness to write. The final image, the mute, suggests the futility of his attempts.

Xu Xu wrote this poem in Guilin on July 11th, 1942 but did not publish it in the *Literature and Arts of Time and Tide* 時與潮文藝 (1943-46), where he'd published his Guilin and Chongqing poems. The poem appeared later in the standalone book *Return*

from Shanghai and his poem anthology *Forty Intertwined Poems* 四十詩綜 (1948).¹⁸⁰

This delay suggests that Xu Xu was hesitant to express his pessimism publicly.

He did not become an actual literary mute, however. He resumed his Sansi Pavilion book series in Chengdu and serialized his novel *The Rustling Wind* in *Eradication* 掃蕩報 (1932-50), a major KMT-controlled newspaper established under the supervision of Chiang Kai-shek's Whampoa military clique. The KMT devoted significant state resources to establish *Eradication* as the center of the KMT wartime newspaper system, and it became one of the most important media outlet in the hinterland.

Despite the newspaper's political mandate, its supplement was not overly ideological. Its chief editor, Lu Jingqing 陸晶清 (1907-93), was a former progressive student from Peking Women's Normal College. She actively participated in literary circles in her early days and corresponded with Lu Xun 魯迅 (1881-1936), who taught her poetry composition. During the war, Lu Jingqing and her husband Wang Lixi 王禮錫 (1901-39) migrated to the hinterland and joined the All-China Writers' Resistance Association. After Wang's death, Lu moved to Chongqing in 1940 and started the work for *Eradication*, which employed many progressive writers and liberal intellectuals. Liu Yichang 劉以鬯 (1918-), a famous writer who moved to Hong Kong in 1948, worked there for several years, and Lao She's *Four Generations under One Roof* 四世同堂

¹⁸⁰ Xu Xu, *Sishi shi zong* (Forty Intertwined Poems) (Shanghai: Yechuang shuwu, 1948), 7.

(1945) appeared in its supplement after Xu Xu's *The Rustling Wind*.

The Rustling Wind is Xu Xu's most well-known work in terms of popularity and artistry. Its "I" protagonist is a bachelor, individualist and philosopher. In the first half of the story, He encounters three beautiful ladies at social events. One heroine, Mei Yingzi 梅瀛子, of mixed American and Chinese blood, has lived in Japan and has a Japanese style name.¹⁸¹ She turns out to be an American spy. Bai Ping 白苹, who has been wrongly recognized as a Japanese spy, is actually a Chongqing agent allying with Mei Yingzi. Helen 海倫, the third heroine, is a quiet and beautiful American living with her mother. Halfway through the narrative, "I" figures out Mei Yingzi and Bai Ping's true identities.

The second half of the story shifts from the protagonist's romances to his adventures as an agent stealing files from the Japanese with the help of Mei and Bai. In the end, he bids farewell to his foreign lover Helen and devotes himself to anti-Japanese resistance in hinterland.

This popular wartime spy novel features three distinct elements: a corrupt prosperous metropolis, foreign beauties, and a thrilling mission. First, Xu Xu establishes a closed society of cosmopolis Shanghai,¹⁸² where exciting events take place that have nothing to do with other Chinese cities or the general political situation. Cosmopolitan

¹⁸¹ Mei Yingzi is not a genuine Japanese name. In Chinese, ying 瀛 can refer to dong ying 東瀛, which means Japan in classic Chinese. zi 子, is a common ending of a Japanese girl's name. The artificial name alludes to her Japanese disguise.

¹⁸² Sima, *Zhongguo xin wenxueshi*, 2:97.

Shanghai, in short, provides a backdrop for spectacular romantic fantasy of spies and foreign beauties. Zhang Yingjin in his *City in Modern Chinese Literature & Film* (1996), considers *The Rustling Wind* a typical urban novel whose male protagonist as the "flâneur, dandy and the detective" who eventually achieves pleasure through solving the puzzle of the women/the city.¹⁸³ Xu Xu's "Shanghai novel" appealed to a wide range of readers in the hinterland.

Second, foreign identities enhance entertainment appeal, as well as the theme of patriotism. The male protagonist's romances with three exotic females, a common element in Xu Xu's fiction, provides a spectacular gender relationship that inverts typical colonial discourse. The invaded and colonized is by no means in the role of the weak female, but is an intelligent and charming male who is attractive to the exotic women.

Third, the finale hews to a popular wartime literary convention. "I" describes his departure: " . . . Under the vast sky, [I] embark upon my journey. The wind is blowing. I see white and grey clouds fluttering in the east."¹⁸⁴ However, though the future should be bright in the hinterland, the imagery of clouds in the wind reveals the uncertainty of both the war situation in the east and his journey to the west.

The popularity of the novel indicates that readers in the hinterland generally welcomed adventure stories about orphan island Shanghai and exotic romance with

¹⁸³ Yingjin Zhang, *The City in Modern Chinese Literature & Film: Configurations of Space, Time, and Gender* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1996), 225–29.

¹⁸⁴ Xu Xu, *Xu Xu Quanjì*, vol. 1 (Taipei: Cheng Chung Book Company, 1966), 595.

agents and foreigners, so long as they ended with an aspirational vision of the free areas. While literary critics have classified the novel as a representative of Shanghai literature, I draw attention to its geopolitical success in the hinterland. It shows how cosmopolitan Shanghai could be adapted into the narrative of nationalism. Xu's two scripts *Moonlight over the Huangpu River* 黃浦江頭的夜月 (1944) and *Brothers* 兄弟 (1944) similarly reveal which literary values Xu Xu could successfully transplant from Shanghai, and which appeared incongruous in the Nationalist-controlled hinterland.

4.3 Occupied Cosmopolis as Spectacle:

The Crisis of a Shanghai Capitalist in *Moonlight over the Huangpu River* (1944)

During his time in the hinterland, Xu Xu published revisions of two plays in 1944: *Moonlight over the Huangpu River* and *Brothers*. Through revision, Xu Xu endeavored to bridge a rift between his works and the prevailing patriotic discourse.

Xu Xu published the initial script of *The Moon* (1939) in Shanghai. In 1941, he revised and republished it as *Moonlight Sonata*. In 1944, Xu Xu again revised the script in Chongqing, and published it in Chengdu as *Moonlight over the Huangpu River*. In these three editions, the author gradually draws closer to the unpredictable reality of wartime. His revisions highlight a specific Shanghai condition for hinterland readers: eye-catching spectacle.

The Moon is a three-act play Xu Xu wrote in his early period in Shanghai. The

action takes place in a Chinese city, "presumably" Shanghai, where "capitalists must rely on the imperialist economy."¹⁸⁵ The time frame is also ambiguous. "It's in the modern era, but not in a specific year. However, if it resembles the economy of anti-Japanese period, you could say it takes place on the eve of the resistance."¹⁸⁶ Like *Life and Death*, *The Moon* concerns various types of families. Li Xunwei 李勳位 is a nouveau riche industrialist. He has two sons, Li Wentian 李聞天, a stereotypical sickly and idealistic poet, and Li Wendao 李聞道, a radical young student. Their driver, Zhang Shengzao 張盛藻 comes from a former traditional merchant's family. His lover, Moon 月亮, who is the Li family's maid, and her brother, Daliang, a worker in Li Xunwei's factory, are from a poor family.

The plot focuses on the love triangle between Zhang Shengzao, Moon and Li Wentian; a second thread is Li Wendao and Daliang's political resistance. As Moon finds herself caught between Zhang Shengzao and Li Wentian, Wendao is arrested for participating in a workers' strike. Li Xunwei's factory and bank are endangered by the workers' strike and a potential bank run, and he turns to a foreign firm, Sandong 三洞洋行 for help. Later, Zhang Shengzao learns from his mother that Li Xunwei was the manager that absconded with money from their family business after Zhang Shengzao's father's death. Li's enterprise is founded on filthy lucre. In the climactic finale, the elder son Wentian dies in the hospital from tuberculosis. At that moment, Moon finally realizes

¹⁸⁵ Xu Xu, *Yueliang* (Moon) (Shanghai: Zhu lin shudian, 1939), 1.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

that she loves Wentian and overcomes her worries about class and wealth to face her true feelings.

Moon's monologue highlights her complicated emotion towards her eternal love of the young master. I read it as Xu Xu's confession about changing affection and a sentimental discussion about love and social class. Moon once tried to be rational about her love. As she points out, the reason Zhang Shengzao won her heart is not because of his nature, but "precisely because he isn't a master, he doesn't have money, and he doesn't have great influence."¹⁸⁷ However, she, at the last moment, acknowledges her affection for the master in an unexpected way.

However, there is no time for young people to bemoan their lost love. Moon's brother Daliang leads everyone to the workers' demonstration in front of the factory. Li Xuwei's bank has collapsed and the factory is going bankrupt due to the conspiracy of the Sandong firm. At Li's house, Zhang's mother comes to interrogate Li Xunwei about his crime. In the end, to prevent a workers' attack, Li Xunwei hires soldiers to strafe the protesters, who include Daliang, Moon, Wendao and Shengzao. Kowning their children in the protest, both Li Xunwei and Zhang's mother are desperated.

In Shanghai in 1941, Xu Xu rewrote the play into the five-act *Moonlight Sonata*. He confesses that he was dissatisfied with the initial script. In the revision, he elides the romance between Moon and Wentian and intensifies the description of a politically

¹⁸⁷ See Ibid., 132.

dangerous moment. *The Moon* opens with Moon and Zhang Shengzao's tryst; *Moonlight Sonata* begins with Li Xunwei's meeting about Shanghai's terrible economic and political situation. Daliang appears as a capable and courageous leader of the workers. In Act II of *Moonlight Sonata*, Wendao's praise of Daliang helps to establish the image of a workers' leader. The new Act V is separated from the love and death scene between Wentian and Moon. It emphasizes political tragedy. Xu Xu strengthens the image of the foreign firm Sandong as the culprit causing the collapse of Li's enterprise, but Li Xunwei is still the indirect killer of the young people.

Xu Xu adds a conversation between Wendao and Wentian to highlight the chasm between idealistic thoughts and social practice. Wendao discerns that his brother's metaphysical thoughts are diverged from the material world, since his brother is not at all concerned about daily routine. Wentian also perceives Wendao's limited resistance, given his identity as a son in the capitalist family.

In these two editions, Xu Xu, as he always does, emphasizes aesthetic values over practical considerations. He includes long monologues and literary dialogues too long for performance on stage. As one reader, Ma Yang, pointed out, *The Moon* exudes "a strong literary flavour." "It's dangerous that the lines are too beautiful [for the stage]."¹⁸⁸ To Xu Xu, these unrealistically long monologues express real emotions. They maintain the psychological distance between the audience and the stage. According to Xu Xu's theory,

¹⁸⁸ Ma Yang, "Yueliang ju zhong de duibai" (Dialogues in *Moon*) *Sino-US Daily*, April 9, 1939, sec. Jina.

it could reach the positive performing affects as what he mentions in his aesthetic theory.¹⁸⁹

The tragedy of the Li family symbolizes the failure of the capitalist. The corruption of his enterprises and family is the result of both the pressure of the chaotic society and Li's incapability of business management. The tragic outcome of Li Wentian and Moon's romance is attributable to their different social classes. While the weak poet cannot endure the bitterness of disappointing love, Moon chooses to devote herself to the demonstration with her brothers and friends to distract from sorrow. Xu Xu constructs a romantic and idealistic conflict between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat in a capitalist cosmopolis. In this, he follows the May Fourth formula of "revolution plus love" described by Liu Jianmei: "[W]riters during the early period of revolutionary literature usually personalized revolution or revolutionalized their romantic and sexual adventures, for both are based on utopian desire," and because love and happiness "are the purpose of revolution."¹⁹⁰ However, in Xu Xu's play, the young people join the demonstration not out of desire for a better world but to sop their frustrations in love and life. The end is even more depressing: The final conversation between Li Xunwei and Mrs Zhang suggests that the youth probably died under the guns of the bloody suppression ordered by none other than Li, the father. Revolutionaries and innocent young people die in a

¹⁸⁹ Xu, *Yue guang qu*, 159–60.

¹⁹⁰ Jianmei Liu, *Revolution Plus Love* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003), 19.

demonstration implies a despairing verdict: The nation's youth are being suffocated by the Chinese authorities.

The play reveals Xu Xu's pessimism in occupied Shanghai. It displays an internal crisis with a hint of the participation of Japanese power. His expression of concern for society in this script resembles Poshek Fu's definition of an intellectual choice of "passivity": "a symbolic choice of protest, a way toward 'dignified survival' that saved one's skin without sacrificing much of one's ideals."¹⁹¹ Xu Xu's resurrection of the revolution-plus-love model conceals his pessimism about the outcome of the resistance. Shanghai, at play's end, becomes a gloomy wasteland.

Xu Xu modified the script again in Chongqing, having escaped from the danger to a place with a totally different moral and literary code. Evacuation from Shanghai encouraged him to reorient his works toward tearing off false appearances of peace and prosperity.

In Chongqing, the play was republished in 1944 with the new title *Moonlight over the Huangpu River*. The title's inclusion of Shanghai's iconic river highlights the story's location. (In the 1950s, Xu Xu reverted to the original title *The Moon*, which indicates that he was dissatisfied with the 1944 title.)

In the 1944 version, Xu Xu specifies the setting as "Shanghai before the Pacific War," and provides details about the background:

¹⁹¹ Fu, *Passivity, Resistance, and Collaboration*, xv.

At that time, people in the foreign concessions harbored a feeling of depression they couldn't put into words. Even rich entrepreneurs felt the same. They were already gradually feeling financial and political pressure from the enemy. They knew that it was impossible to move everything to the hinterland but were also unwilling to make a partial sacrifice. So most of them hesitated, trying to save the situation by making some concessions, and eking out a meager living. However, patriotic workers opposed factory owners gradually making compromises with the Japanese. In the end, it led to a huge strike.

那時候，租界上的人都有說不出的苦悶，連富有的企業家們都是一樣，他們已經慢慢地感到敵人經濟與政治方面的壓力，想全部內移又不可能，作一部份犧牲又捨不得，於是大都是於移不絕，委屈求全，苟延殘喘，但是愛國的工人們反對廠家與日方逐漸妥協，最後鬧成了很大的罷工。¹⁹²

In introducing the characters, Xu Xu further clarifies their political intentions. For example, he depicts Wendao as a progressive student who asks his father to move to the hinterland and decides to join in the strike after he's rebuffed. Xu Xu also makes several changes to the main body of the play. He shortens Wentian's monologues, deleting his long-winded and abstruse speech about human beings, and his overall stage-time. Instead, he focuses more on the development of Wentian and Moon's relationship. Xu Xu no longer emphasizes Wentian's superior position as a metaphysical poet. Wentian's expression of love to Moon is clearer and, in Act II, he no longer addresses his opinion on human nature in the conversation with Wendao.¹⁹³ In contrast, Wendao's role in the conversation is accentuated. For the first time, Wendao speaks of the political context:

¹⁹² Xu Xu, *Huangpu jiang tou de ye yue* (Moonlight over the Huangpu River) (Shanghai: Yechuang shuwu, 1948), 1. The 1948 version is a faithful reprint of the first edition in 1944.

¹⁹³ See Xu, *Yue guang qu*, 43; Xu Xu, *Huangpu jiang tou de ye yue* (Hong Kong: Yechuang Shuwu, 1951), 43.

"The reality is we are in an anti-Japanese war. We need to fight the enemy in this Orphan Island."¹⁹⁴ He insists that his father should move his entire factory, the "biggest factory in Shanghai,"¹⁹⁵ to the "free area" 自由區.¹⁹⁶

Xu Xu also revises the ending. It is now Japanese soldiers from the Sandong foreign firm rather than the Chinese military guards that kill the demonstrating workers. Wendao is mortally wounded in the demonstration, and, when he returns home with Moon, his last words to his father include: "They murder our patriotic compatriots in your name, and occupy your factory in the name of security."¹⁹⁷ In other words, the father is now innocent. Before death, Wendao convinces his anguished father to help more young people move to the hinterland and devote into the resistance. He also predicts that the Chinese will soon win the war. *Moonlight over the Huangpu River* thus has a much stronger anti-Japanese message than previous versions.

Xu Xu's revision is symptomatic of Chinese writers who moved to the hinterland after the outbreak of the Pacific War. The "free area" became a signifier of the only solution to the difficulties in the occupied area. Writing about suffering life in occupied areas was their common theme. The worsened political situation after 1941 provided new literary inspiration. Two other plays about the life in the occupied area are Lao She's *Who's the First One to Chongqing?* 誰先到了重慶 (1942) and Yu Ling's *A Long Night's*

¹⁹⁴ Xu, *Huangpu jiang tou de ye yue*, 43.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 42.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 44.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 159.

March 長夜行 (1942). In *Who Arrives Chongqing First*, elder brother Wu Fengming 吳鳳鳴 sacrifices himself to help his younger brother Fengyu 鳳羽 escape from Beijing to Chongqing. Fengming fights hard against both traitors and the Japanese. Before his death, he says: "Looks like I'll be the first one to Chongqing."¹⁹⁸ In *A Long Night's March*, Yu Ling delineates the lives of three families sharing a house in Shanghai alleyway. He focuses on the difficult life before and after Japanese occupation of the French concession. Opportunists, traitors and underground agents create a complicated and dangerous environment in the house. In the end of the play, one protagonist Yu Weixin 俞味辛 declares his plan to go to "the bright area" and join the "New Fourth Army."¹⁹⁹ Another main character, Chen Jian 陳堅, claims:

In Shanghai, the Shanghai of the future, the work will be more difficult, but also more essential. We need to fight the Japanese imperialists, traitors and collaborators to the death! However, you and I cannot keep working in Shanghai. We'll need to be replaced by another bunch of people . . . In the future, in the near future, we'll fight our way back!

上海，今後的上海，工作更困難，也更重要了。我們得跟日本帝國主義者、漢奸、賣國賊拚到底，幹到底！不過，你、我是不能再在上海工作下去了。得換一批人來幹。……今後，不久的將來，咱們會打回來的！²⁰⁰

The occupied Beijing and Shanghai imagined in Lao She and Yu Ling's plays are gloomy and chaotic. They sought to show the unbearable hardships and tenacious

¹⁹⁸ Lao She, "Shui xian dao le Chongqing (Who's the First One to Chongqing?)," *Zhongguo Qingnian* (China Youth) 7, no. 2/3 (1942): 101.

¹⁹⁹ Yu Ling, *Chang ye xing* (A Long Night's March) (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1963), 138.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 138–39.

struggles going on in those areas. Shanghai and Beijing appear as staged backdrops, spectacles to be watched by the audience, and the hinterland as the heroes' spiritual home. Chongqing or the "bright area" is not just a concrete geographical location, but also a totem of the free spirits of all Chinese people fighting the enemy. Ironically, the heroes never physically reach the hinterland, so the "free area" exists only in their imaginations, intact and sacred.

Lao She and Yu Ling's plays both contain major antagonists in the guise of Chinese traitors and collaborators. The scripts center on straightforward dramatic conflict between heroes and villains, retreat and resistance. *Moonlight over the Huangpu River* offers no such clear dichotomy. Though Xu Xu shifts responsibility for the massacre from the capitalist Li Xunwei to the Japanese, and advocates moving to the hinterland, the main theme remains obscure and dubious. The romance between Wentian and Moon now appears as an irrelevant interlude amidst the chaos—a leftover from Xu Xu's Shanghai time, even though the moon in the title suggests that Moon was once the center of the play. Besides the invisible Sandong foreign firm, and the Japanese soldiers who slaughter the protesters, no antagonist appears. All of these revisions suggest that Xu Xu was adamant about keeping the story ambiguous and the focus on aesthetic experience and moral judgment. Moon's confession after Wentian's death, for example, demonstrates a humanistic choice that differs from common expectation of a marriage between the proletariat. Li Xunwei, one of the supposed culprits, is depicted as a victim. His fate

evinces a complex human nature composed of greed, weakness, remorse and a sense of affection to his dying son.

Liu Jianmei contends that "As a modern city in a third-world country, Shanghai had to reject modes of thinking that expressed its cultural imagination in simplistic ways, such as native nationalism, colonialism, and modernity-as-revolution."²⁰¹ In this case, Xu Xu panders to the Chongqing discourse of resistance. However he refuses to provide a sharp confrontation between Chinese and their enemies, as established mainstream playwrights tended to do. Unlike *Who's the First One to Chongqing?* and *A Long Night's March*, *Moonlight over the Huangpu River* evinces multiple concerns: about love, family, economic inequality, and a capitalist society in peril. Xu Xu constructs a multi-faceted image of "Shanghai", emphasizing family conflict and the tragic triumph of love over social mores, while failing to present direct confrontation between the enemy and the forces of justice. All told, complexity weakens the theme of patriotism.

4.4 *Brothers* (1944): Awkward Fraternal Affection between the Nations

Xu Xu's revised play *Brothers* presents a story of human compassion transcending national identity. In his 1944 revision, completed in Chongqing, Xu Xu attempts to establish fraternal conundrum under the political pressure of nationalism. The revision divulges Xu Xu's distinctive but fragile transnational perspective on the dilemma of

²⁰¹ Liu, *Revolution Plus Love*, 135.

patriotism. It is also one of the few Chinese spoken dramas to depict a detailed image of a Japanese officer.

Brothers is a revised version of *The Death of He Luofu*, a five-act play about domestic conflict setting in an unnamed northern city in autumn. Xu Xu finished the script of *He Luofu* in Shanghai in March 1941. *He Luofu* begins with Zimei 子美 waiting anxiously for her fiancé Li Huang 李晃 at Su Binqun's 蘇秉群 house. News about a derailed train worries Zimei tremendously, but Li Huang eventually arrives at the house. In Zimei and Li Huang's conversation, we find that the Shanghainese Li Huang figure is a disguise of He Luofu, an important intelligence agent of some party, and a fugitive wanted by "the enemy." They exchange intelligence about the military strength of enemy troops, and He Luofu learns that the enemy's commander in this city is He Datang, his biological elder brother.

In Act II, He Luofu goes to a brothel with Su Bingqun and some enemy officers in order to collect intelligence. There, Lieutenant Colonel Ma 馬中校 claims that the agent He Luofu was caught this morning at the train station. This "He Luofu" has been jailed and tortured but confessed nothing. He Luofu tries his best to get intelligence from the conversation about military distribution in the region, but this careless action exposes his real identity and the enemy arrests him.

He Luofu's comrades in the city speculate that he turned himself in so that the innocent man would be released. The speculation leads to a debate about the value of

innocents' lives versus the destiny of society and nation. They resolve to rescue He Luofu from prison. Meanwhile, facing his elder brother in jail, He Luofu refuses to reveal anything about his organization and plans. He Datang repeatedly appeals to his younger brother's sense of filial duty and affection between blood relations. He Luofu declines, arguing that they both should have more intense love toward "the class and the party [they] belonging to."²⁰² Since Datang's duty as a commander is to exterminate the secret agency, He Luofu argues, Datang's actions are justified. The true conflict is between their "ideologies."²⁰³

As He Datang's troops prepare to retreat from the city because the battle is going against them, he pleads with He Luofu to give up his work; otherwise he must kill him "as required by law."²⁰⁴ He Luofu, again, rejects his proposal. His faith is his life, and he has no way to separate them. He wishes to die a martyr's death, so he turns down the poison offered by He Datang, and asks his brother to kill him with his pistol. In the end, He Datang shoots his brother, and poisons himself. Other agents finally break into the jail, only to be plunged into grief when they find their leader Luofu dead in a pool of blood.

Xu Xu's structures his tragedy as humanistic rather than nationalistic. The brothers are loyal to their political beliefs, but still retain affection for fellow human beings, despite their ideological differences. The tragic ending elevates the sentimental

²⁰² Xu Xu, *He Luofu zhi si* (The Death of He Luofu) (Shanghai: Yechuang shuwu, 1941), 102.

²⁰³ Ibid., 108.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 131.

atmosphere to a romantic, emotional extreme. He Luofu's heroic death make him a revolutionary martyr, while He Datang's suicide indicates his strong affection for his beloved brother. He Luofu and He Datang's dilemma transcends the stereotyped opposition of good versus evil and the limitations of binary patriotic narratives. Hu Die in her book *A Study of Orphan Island Shanghai Drama* 上海孤島話劇研究 divides spoken drama in "Orphan Island" Shanghai into melodrama and serious progressive drama, arguing that one finds that both genres have binary stances: melodrama prefers to draw stereotyped characters, while progressive spoken dramas establish stark patriotic symbols and stories of resistance.²⁰⁵ Xu Xu blurs the boundary of the two categories and builds his own dramatic style. Frederik Green contends that Xu Xu's plays demonstrate "the individual and human existence that was revealed only under the extreme condition of war."²⁰⁶ Individual morality lies at the nexus of *The Death of He Luofu*. The concern about Individualism is similar to *Life and Death* and *Mother's Portrait* (see Chapter 3).

I partly agree with Frederik Green's argument that Xu Xu, in this play, defied demands of moral collectivism and a stereotyped dichotomy of justice and evil.²⁰⁷ But in positing a limited notion of the individual, Green neglects the play's conversation with the national crisis. I contend that Xu Xu's individualism subvert common patriotic

²⁰⁵ See Chang-tai Hung, *War and Popular Culture: Resistance in Modern China, 1937-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 10.

²⁰⁶ Frederik H. Green, "Rescuing Love from the Nation: Love, Nation, and Self in Xu Xu's Alternative Wartime Fiction and Drama," *Frontiers of Literary Studies in China* 8, no. 1 (March 2014): 149.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 145.

ideologies by placing individuals in opposition to nations. He provides an artistic gesture for a desperate yet ignored political and domestic problem during the anti-Japanese war period.

Several clues in the script allude to earlier civil conflicts, including the Nationalists' purge of communists in the late 1920s and 1930s. The warden of the jail where He Luofu is in custody discusses a long history of its various political prisoners: revolutionaries of the late Qing, former officials of the Republican era, Nationalists, and Communists. Prisoners come and go with different identities, confusing the warden.²⁰⁸ His words illuminate ironies in China's social chaos. They also indicate that the play is set at some point after the arrest of Communists in 1927. He Luofu's first name overlaps with the alias of Zhang Wentian 張聞天 (1900-1976),²⁰⁹ one of the early leaders of the Communist party. Zhang came back from the Soviet Union to Shanghai in 1931, while the White Terror was happening in Shanghai. Almost at the same time, as mentioned in Chapter 1, Xu Xu was reading Marxism and Communism at Peking University and writing progressive plays about revolution and resistance. This play thus reflects on earlier political tragedy and projects it onto the current crisis. As what is mentioned in Chapter 3, Xu Xu was disappointed with the post-May Fourth society. *The Death of He Luofu* dramatizes yet another example of the misery individuals under the unceasing

²⁰⁸ Xu, *He Luofu zhi si*, 116.

²⁰⁹ Cheng Zhongyuan, *Zhang Wentian zhuan* (Biography of Zhang Wentian) (Beijing: Dangdai Zhongguo chubanshe, 1993), 127.

chaos in China. *The Death of He Luofu* also expresses Xu Xu's pessimistic opinions on war and persistent internal conflicts in China: while two individuals seek reconciliation, political interests lead it to a dead end.

Xu Xu revised *The Death of He Luofu* into *Brothers* in Chongqing in 1944. Most lines of the play are identical. However, small changes to the script result in tremendous differences. Xu Xu wrote in 1944 that some plot elements of *The Death of He Luofu*, especially Act II, were unsatisfactory. Since time passed, he reorganized some parts and revised some details. "It has probably transformed into a dissimilar thing, so I have changed its title."²¹⁰

The biggest difference is the identities of protagonists. Xu Xu changes He Luofu's name to He Tefu 何特甫. His elder brother becomes Akita Nanitarou 秋田何大郎.²¹¹ Their late mother was Japanese. An uncle of father's side raised He Tefu in China, but Akita stayed in Japan and received education there. They spent several years living together when He Tefu studied at Tokyo University.

In *The Death of He Luofu*, the elder brother He Datang is not a negative or stereotyped villain. Like He Datang, Akita is a faithful officer. In *He Luofu*, one recognizes the fraternal relation between brothers as a metaphor for the people of the

²¹⁰ Xu Xu, *Xiongdi* (Brothers) (Chengdu: Dongfang shushe, 1944), 134.

²¹¹ 何大郎 is not a common Japanese name. Though I translate it into Nanitarou. It is usually written as 何太郎 in Kanji. My speculation is that Xu Xu transformed the character's name from He Datang into Hedalang causally to make the name looks like a Japanese one.

same nation. Chinese people are associated with their compatriots by blood and lineage. The metaphor loses its magic in *Brothers*, since a Chinese hero of the resistance has a Japanese biological brother who is a major general.

Xu Xu's revision introduces elements related to the anti-Japanese war. However, unlike mainstream patriotic propaganda, which emphasized difference, he renders China's relationship with the enemy as one of recognition. In *Brothers*, Xu Xu refuses to identify the Japanese character Akita as the antagonist. His argument is closed to the recognition of a typical colonial relationship. The colonizer is more likely to accentuate intimacy and friendship with the colonized, as seen in French colonial family romances, in which "revolutionary men [in France] who embraced the ideal of fraternity and liberty"²¹² were willing to regard colonized men as their little brothers. Réunion's educated colored, intellectuals, workers and peasants adopted this moral code, imagining "themselves as the brothers of French citizens."²¹³ Xu Xu's cosmopolitan perspective resonates with the colonial imagination unintentionally, making his quasi-patriotic attempt awkward.

Nation, to Xu Xu, is at the root of the conflict. "And brother, please kill me. I forgive you. I understand the one who kills me is not you. It's 'your' nation. Mother would also forgive you."²¹⁴ Still, Xu Xu obscures the binary of absolute moral values and

²¹² Françoise Vergès, *Monsters and Revolutionaries: Colonial Family Romance and Métissage* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), 5.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Xu, *Xiongli*, 120.

human justice he articulated in *The Death of He Luofu*. He accentuates the opposition of individual and nation to construct a message that all individuals are victims of a giant political mechanism no matter their identities. As Xu Xu contended later in 1950s, society is made up of individuals and exists for their happiness.²¹⁵ In *Brothers*, he thus challenged collective patriotism.

The death of Akita is preceded by a lyrical monologue. In both *The Death of He Luofu* and *Brothers*, it is an important moment that the elder brother wishes to break the barrier between them and realize his eternal reunion with his brother.

(After Akita poisons himself)

Akita: Brother, this is your hand. I'm holding your hand, just as we did in childhood. . . . Then, ah, then, then we two were always like one person. There was no misunderstanding. I could die for you at any time, and you for me. What have we come to? We believed that nothing could separate us. We believed that no power existed that could separate us. But now, unexpectedly, something has. And what? An iron barrier. This iron barrier is our mountain. But it does not split us apart. . . . Now join hands to die together, just as beautiful and happy as we once were. I'm laughing, brother—you laugh too! We're no longer separated, are we? . . .

弟弟，這是你的手，我現在拉著你，正如我們童年的時候拉著一樣……以後，啊，以後，以後我們兩個人一直同一個人一樣，從來沒有半點隔膜，隨時隨地你也可以為我死，這是什麼樣一種境界？我們真不相信會有東西分開我們。我們不相信世界上還有這樣的力量可以把我們分開。但是現在竟有這樣的東西把我們分開了，這是什麼？這是這個鐵欄，這鐵欄是我們

²¹⁵ Dongfang, *Huidao geren zhuyi yu ziyou zhuyi*, 33.

的山。但是並沒有把我們分開……現在我們攜手去死，同以前一樣的美麗，一樣的快樂，我笑著，弟弟，你也笑！我們沒有分開是不是……²¹⁶

Akita's romantic monologue simplifies the whole conflict of the play, and disguises the problem with intense emotion. Xu Xu ends his play with kitsch.

Romanticism has an intimate relation with kitsch. Călinescu contends: "Replacing historical or contemporary reality by clichés, kitsch clearly thrives on some emotional needs that are generally associated with the romantic world view."²¹⁷ In general, kitsch refers only to inferior aesthetic taste, but it appears extensively in wartime narrative, as a practical method for propaganda to incite the public's emotion for certain purpose.

One prominent example is *Put down Your Whip* 放下你的鞭子 (1931), a street play written by Chen Liting 陳鯉庭 (1910-2013) that was popular during the Anti-Japanese War. The wartime version tells the story about a father and his daughter escaping from Manchuria. The poor girl is forced to perform on the street albeit her poor health. Exasperated by her poor performance, the father raises the whip towards the girl. A young man at this point stands out and shouts: "Put down your whip." He reproaches the old man for torturing his own daughter. However, the girl defends for her father by recounting the plight of their families and hometown under the Japanese occupation. In the end, the young man appeals to the audience: "If we do not unite quickly to defend ourselves against Japanese aggression, we will soon meet the same fate as our

²¹⁶ Xu, *Xiongdì*, 131–32.

²¹⁷ Matei Călinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1987), 239–40.

countrymen in Manchuria."²¹⁸ The last scene is a typical kitsch moment. The young man no longer questions the old man's abuse to his daughter, but turns his anger to the absent Japanese. According to historian Hung Chang-tai's interview with Xie Bingying and Lü Fu, the actor's request provoked spectators' anger towards the Japanese, and "people responded with an outburst of emotions ranging from profound sadness to furious indignation, touching off waves of patriotic enthusiasm."²¹⁹ Everyone was enchanted by the performance and the nationalistic passion.

Xu Xu propagandizes for a total different cause. Not stirring up readers' patriotism to resist against Japanese, Xu Xu's play implicitly appeal for peace between warring nations. Fraternal romantic emotion substitutes for an irreconcilable national barrier and bridges the immense gap between people of two countries. In the end, the play's kitsch provides the "lyrical ecstasy"²²⁰ amidst a weak attempt at reconciliation.

Another important change is the reason the protagonist was caught by the enemy. Unlike the careless He Luofu, He Tefu confesses his identity at the brothel with Major Nomura 野村 and Major Hirohara 廣原 because he wants to save college students in Japanese custody. He Tefu contends that "those progressive college students are

²¹⁸ See Hung, *War and Popular Culture*, 59–60.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 40.

²²⁰ "[K]itsch results in an ecstatic and illusory vision of the world which sacrifices all reflection for the benefit of the sole glorification of feeling." See Eva Le Grand, *Kundera, Or, the Memory of Desire*, trans. Lin Burman (Waterloo, Ont: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1999), 11.

outstanding talents of our nation,"²²¹ so his life is not worth of the death of those many lives.

Xu Xu obviously was not satisfied with the way that his hero was accidentally caught by the enemy in *The Death of He Luofu*, so he strengthened his image as a noble preacher of patriotism and a literary martyr. *He Luofu*'s ending could be seen as the nadir of the Communists under the pressure of KMT. However, the plot element is problematic in the context of anti-Japanese resistance. Few patriotic plays ended with such a disappointing situation: the nation's top agent dying in the prison without any encouraging declaration, leaving other people devastated. Though Xu Xu tried to echo the ideological tide of patriotism and regarded it as a responsibility, his preference for tragic romance sets his work apart. Unlike many wartime contemporaries, he did not discard his personal artistic vision.²²²

Thus, Xu Xu's romantic, idealistic and individualistic ethos—a remnant from his cosmopolitan age in Shanghai—makes hybrid but awkward attempts for the theme of "Chinese versus Japanese." Xu Xu disguises his priority for romantic love under the nationalistic imperative, downgrading romantic intrigue and domestic disputes. On one hand, Xu Xu modifies some characters, such as Li Wendao, Daliang and He Tefu to cater the appreciation of patriotic heroes in the hinterland. On the other hand, the plots of two

²²¹ Xu, *Xiongdì*, 27.

²²² Those writers at Yan'an, though might offer certain criticisms, tried their best to modify themes and language style of their writing. Ding Ling famously gave up her early bourgeois writing style for a revolutionary one.

revisions cannot fit into the mainstream despite the patriotic factors Xu Xu includes in the plays. They reveal a complicated emotional state for weak or negative characters, classes and even nations. His transnational perspective causes crisis of moral compassion amidst war. When facing the Japanese directly, it seems that individual fulfillment is not persuasive enough. The dissonance between the previous story frame and the new factors produce a loose space for interpretation. Xu Xu's compromise with mainstream patriotism in terms of content and form was incomplete. His revisions, though they brought a fresh perspective to the occupied area, were too fragile to withstand nationalistic criticism.

Conclusion

Xu Xu's journey did not end in Chongqing. In 1944, he visited the United States as a correspondent for *Eradiction*. In New York, he met old friends such as Lin Yutang and celebrities such as Hu Shi and Pearl Buck. In 1946, he chose to go back to Shanghai. One year after the establishment of the People's Republic, Xu Xu moved to Hong Kong, where he lived for the rest of his life. When he met Lau Shiu-ming in the café in the mid-1970s, he had written for decades and experienced many difficulties but still had not found his place in literary history. Dr. Joseph Yick, who was teaching in the Hong Kong Baptist University in the late 1970s, says that Xu Xu, then the director of its Chinese department, had long been upset about C.T. Hsia's neglect of him in *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction*.²²³

Xu Xu's works, it must be admitted, are not perfect. Sentimentality afflicts his writing. His melodramatic setting and lyrical lines prevent his drama scripted to be accepted by a large drama audience. However, Xu Xu's works developed and evolved his own cosmopolitan vision. He combined his apprenticeship in Shanghai in The Analect School with his abroad life stories. All his personal experience and philosophical thoughts of humanism contribute to his special perspective. His travel experience and continual writing make him a good example of literary exiles wandering in China during World War II. As a cosmopolitan writer, his choice to move to Chongqing in the middle of the war makes him stand out from other Shanghai-based writers. His drama scripts,

²²³ Joseph Yick, Conversation about Xu Xu, September 2016.

which bridge his life in Shanghai and Chongqing, provide the best lens to scrutinize his brand of liberalism, his pursuit of pure literary aesthetics and his negotiation of identity politics in an extreme era of nationalistic imperative. The study of Xu Xu provides another literary alternative in the changeable wartime period.

Having grown up during the May Fourth era, Xu Xu expressed disappointment with the post-May Fourth era, disappointment that the patriotic veneer of his plays fails to hide. He breaks from the common pattern of melodrama, pairing strong emotional motivation and individualistic thoughts. In *Life and Death*, young people get frustrated with reality and seek a metaphysical and ontological answer for the meaning of existence. In *Mother's Portrait*, Xu Xu portrays an unrealistic reconciliation of young people in a traditional family. He makes his characters compromise with patriarchy, fortune and power, but he challenges orthodox ethics by praising Cai Xiaojing and Wang Puyu, who commit adultery but nevertheless devote themselves to the family they love. In *Moonlight Sonata* and *The Death of He Luofu*, he reverses the common ending of youth devoting themselves to the revolution and concludes with gloomy tragedy. Xu Xu's pessimistic depictions of young people show his disenchantment with post-May Fourth society. He reveals his confusion, desperation, and low expectations regarding the possibility of reconciliation within both Chinese society and humanity as a whole. For this idealistic writer, love and human affection is the ultimate solution. He offered his idealistic and liberal solutions to the predicament of youth in modern China and uncovered the

frustrating social reality through his own rhetorical expressions.

Xu Xu's early attempts at spoken drama were heavily influenced by his academic study of psychology and philosophy. Theories inspired by Herbert Langfeld, namely empathy and psychical distance, assert the necessity to explore human's common nature in drama, as well as to detach plot from audience's recognition. Xu never fully adapted such theories into a Chinese context, but he did develop a cosmopolitan literary notion of aesthetics. Stylized dialogues and abstract conversations in his plays are experiments meant to be read, not performed, and these dramatic works do demonstrate his versatility in multiple genres. In "An Effective Military Weapon," Xu Xu uses the form of the drama script to press his argument. In *When the Tides Come*, he combines poetry with drama, which gives the play feeling of a folklore myth that diverges from realistic narratives. This versatility contributes to his cosmopolitan vision of literary texts as a communicative space for essential human problems.

Looking at Xu Xu's plays in historical context, I find that scholars, in assessing the choices available to wartime writers, have overemphasized patriotism and propaganda. To supplement to Poshek Fu's argument of "passivity, resistance, and collaboration" in occupied Shanghai, I argue that Orphan Island Shanghai still left space for writers to develop other artistic visions, such as aestheticism. As a liberal cosmopolitan playwright, though criticized by the radical left-wing writer like Baren, Xu Xu could still express his desire not to do nationalistic propaganda.

Freedom in the hinterland, however, was ambiguous. Political restrictions and financial challenges pushed intellectuals towards producing nationalistic writings. As a newcomer to the field, Xu Xu achieved success by depicting Shanghai as a novel spectacle. Xu Xu's plays, which try hard to propagandize nationalism as well as individualism, cause an ambiguous literary space for criticisms. However, readers accepted his rethorical writing style. His book series Sansi Pavilion was a success in the hinterland. *Brothers* and other drama scripts were published without any obstruction from the authorities.²²⁴

Edward Gunn concludes that there existed two distinctive themes in Chinese wartime spoken drama. He takes the traitor as "a theme no writer could refrain from rendering" while they left the invading Japanese as abstractions.²²⁵ The other theme is the importance of the family. "Conflict between nationalistic, idealistic youth and stubborn, cynical parents" recur in plays of this period. Major characters not involved in a family situation were usually depicted as single and orphaned.²²⁶ Xu Xu's wartime dramas are an exception. His depiction of the Japanese general in *Brothers* and the Chinese family in *Mother's Portrait*, *Life and Death* and *Moonlight over the Huangpu River* provide other emotional solutions for Chinese people confronting devastation. Intimacy between family members and individuals always take precedence in Xu Xu's

²²⁴ At the back cover of *Brothers*, there is the publishing permission from Central Committee on Books and Periodicals Censorship 中央圖書雜誌審查委員會.

²²⁵ Edward M Gunn, *Unwelcome Muse: Chinese Literature in Shanghai and Peking, 1937-1945* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 126–27.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 127.

value system to traditional moral codes and even loyalty to the nation. He transforms tension between nations into the opposition between individuals facing their own destiny and the political interests of the nation. These themes originate from Xu Xu's own individualism and cosmopolitanism.

During the Anti-Japanese War, Chinese intellectuals, common people, the field of spoken drama, and the nation itself were at crossroads. Though no one could escape the influence of nationalism, people still had diverse choices under the shadow of national crisis, Xu Xu, in this epoch faced his own choices. Xu Xu's wartime choices illustrate the experience of a writer seeking to create a space for his liberal cosmopolitanism, commercially and spiritually, through his literary works. His works helps us to see the diversity of literature in the hinterland.

Xu Xu's case reveals the existence of a fragmentary yet partly free space for intellectuals to express their diverse literary intentions, both in Orphan Island Shanghai and in the KMT-controlled hinterland. Of course, the example of a single writer is not enough to represent a group of intellectuals. This study raises questions, such as: what other themes existed in wartime spoken drama? Was Xu Xu the only liberal cosmopolitan writer to achieve a measure of success in the hinterland? How can we identify or assess other hidden liberal literary spaces in wartime literature, in the hinterland or in the occupied region? Though liberalism in modern China was doomed to fail after 1949, what did these wartime experiences contribute to China during or after the war? As the

case of Xu Xu shows, China's wartime literary field was more diverse than is typically acknowledged, and further research will reveal how other writers and artists responded to crisis as both groups and individuals.

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———. *Zhongguo Xiandai Xiju Lungao* 中國現代喜劇論稿 (Draft History of Modern Chinese Comedies). Beijing: China Renmin University Press, 2015.

Zhang, Yongjiu 張永久. “Yunti tong wang tiantang” 雲梯通往天堂 (Cloudy Stairs to Heaven). *Changjian wenyi* 長江文藝 (Yangzi Literature), no. 11 (2015): 142–49.

Zhang, Yuhua 張羽華. “Zai zhelihua xushu zhong shentou renwen jingshen de ai: lun Xu Xu xiju de meixue fengge” 在哲理化敘述中滲透人文精神的愛——論徐訏戲劇的美學風格 (Penetrating Humanistic Love in the Philosophical Expression: On the Aesthetic Style of Xu Xu's Drama). *Sichuan xiju* 四川戲劇 (Sichuan Drama), no. 9 (2015).

Appendices

Appendix A: Editions of Xu Xu's Drama Scripts

Notes:

1. * indicates a retitled or re-written version of the play.
2. Bibliographic information in this appendix derives from editions I consulted personally, as well as catalogues available online via the Modern Chinese Literature Research Portal:

- “Xu Xu zhushu ziliao (chuban ben) 徐訏著書資料(初版本)” (Books Authored by Xu Xu [First editions])

<http://www.modernchineseliterature.net/writers/XuXu/works-1sted-b5.jsp>.

(Accessed November 15, 2016).

- “Xu Xu zhushu ziliao (zaiban/chongyin ben) 徐訏著書資料 (再版/重印本)” (Books Authored by Xu Xu [New Editions and Reprints])

<http://www.modernchineseliterature.net/writers/XuXu/works-reved-b5.jsp>.

(Accessed November 15, 2016).

***Junshi liqi* 軍事利器 (*An Effective Military Weapon*, 4 acts)**

Serialized in *Xifeng* 西風 (West Wind monthly), no. 33 (1939): 226–33.

Subsequently published in the collection of short fictions *Haiwai de qingdiao* 海外的情調 (Sentiments from Abroad)²²⁷:

Shanghai: Yechuang shuwu 夜窗書屋, 1941.

Chengdu: Dongfang shushe 東方書社, 1943.

Chengdu: Dongfang shushe, 1944.

Shanghai: Yechuang shuwu, 1947.

Shanghai: Yechuang shuwu, 1948.

Hong Kong: Yechuang shuwu, 1950.

Hong Kong: Yechuang shuwu, 1951.

Taipei: Changfeng chubanshe 長風出版社, 1957.

²²⁷ See Section 2.4.

Taipei: Cheng Chung Book Company 正中書局, 1977.

Taipei: Cheng Chung Book Company, 1978.

***Yueliang* 月亮 (Moon)**

Shanghai: Zhulin shudian 珠林書店, 1939. (3 acts)

Hong Kong: Yechuang shuwu, 1954. (5 acts)

Taipei: Cheng Chung Book Company, 1979. (5 acts)

**Yueguang qu* 月光曲 (Moonlight Sonata, 5 acts). Shanghai: Yechuang shuwu, 1941.

**Huangpu jiang tou de ye yue* 黃浦江頭的夜月 (Moonlight over the Huangpu River, 5 acts). Chengdu: Dongfang shushe, 1944.

Shanghai: Yechuang shuwu, 1948.

***Sheng yu si* 生與死 (Life and Death, 4 acts)**

Shanghai: Yechuang shuwu, 1939.

Shanghai: Yechuang shuwu, 1947.

Hong Kong: Asia Press, 1954.

Taipei: Changfeng chubanshe, 1954.

Taipei: Cheng Chung Book Company, 1979.

***Chao lai de shihou* 潮來的時候 (When the Tides Come, 5 acts)**

Shanghai: Yechuang shuwu, 1940.

Chengdu: Dongfang shushe, 1944.

Shanghai: Yechuang shuwu, 1948.

Hong Kong: Yechuang shuwu, 1952.

Taipei: Cheng Chung Book Company, 1979.

***Gudao de kuangxiao* 孤島的狂笑 (Guffaw of the Orphan Island)**

This comedy collection consists of two plays:

- "Zu ya ding mai" 租押頂賣 (Rent and Sell, 1 act)
- "Nan hun nü jia" 男婚女嫁 (Marriage between Men and Women, 2 acts)

Shanghai: Yechuang shuwu, 1941.

**Gudao de kuangxiao* is collected with the third comedy *Qiyue* 契約 (Contract) (1942) in the book named *Qiyue*.

***Qiyue* 契約 (Contract)**

Chengdong: Dongfang shushe, 1942.

Hong Kong: Yazhou chubanshe 亞洲出版社, 1953.

Taipei: Changfeng chubanshe 長風出版社, 1954。

Taipei: Changfeng chubanshe, 1955.

Hong Kong: Dagong shuju 大公書局, 1957.

Taipei: Cheng Chung Book Company, 1979.

***Xiongdi* 兄弟 (Brothers, 5 acts)**

Chengdu: Dongfang shushe, 1944.

Shanghai: Yechuang shuwu, 1947.

Shanghai: Yechuang shuwu, 1948.

Hong Kong: Yechuang shuwu, 1958.

Taipei: Cheng Chung Book Company, 1978.

Taipei: Cheng Chung Book Company, 1979.

**He Luofu zhi si* 何洛甫之死 (The death of He Luofu, 5 acts). Shanghai: Yechuang shuwu, 1941.

***Muqin de xiaoxiang* 母親的肖像 (Mother's Portrait, 4 acts)**

Shanghai: Yechuang shuwu, 1941.

Chengdu: Dongfang shushe, 1942.

Chengdu: Dongfang shushe, 1944.

Shanghai: Yechuang shuwu, 1947.

Hong Kong: Yechuang shuwu, 1950.

Taipei: Cheng Chung Book Company, 1979.

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Xu Xu quanji 徐訏全集 (Complete Works of Xu Xu). Vol. 1 - 15. Taipei: Cheng Chung Book Company, 1966 - 80.

Xu Xu wenji 徐訏文集 (Collected Works of Xu Xu). Vol. 1 - 16. Shanghai: Shanghai sanlian shudian, 2008.

Appendix B: List of Xu Xu's "Tuesday Drama Talk" 火曜劇話 Essays, 1938-39

Published in the supplement "Anthology" 集納 of *Sino-US Daily* (中美日報) from November 1938 to May 1939 in Shanghai, which is discussed in chapter two. Xu Xu's column is named "Tuesday Drama Talk," in which he talks about aesthetic problems, performing and directing techniques in Chinese drama as well as theatres of various genres.

1938

11.22 "Xiju yu jiqiao" 戲劇與技巧 (Drama and Technique)

11.29 "Xiju zuowei kangzhan de xuanchuan" 戲劇作為抗戰的宣傳 (Drama as an Anti-Japanese Propaganda Device)

12.6 "Zhengqu huaju de guanzhong" 爭取話劇的觀眾 (Attracting an Audience for Spoken Drama)

12.13 "Cong gewu dao gewu ju" 從歌舞到歌舞劇 (From Song and Dance to Song-and-dance Drama)

12.20 "Zhujue yu peijue" 主角與配角 (Leading Roles and Minor Roles)

12.27 "Suowei guoju" 所謂國劇 (So-called National Drama)

1939

1.3 "Xiju duiyu guanzhong de yaoqiu" 戲劇對於觀眾的要求 (The Requirement of Drama for the Audience)

1.10 "Yanyuan lishu yu xiju di wenti" 演員隸屬於戲劇底問題 (The Issue of Actors Subordinating to Drama)

1.17 "Mu'ou xi de tichang" 木偶戲的提倡 (Promotion of Puppet Plays)

1.24 "Xiju mei de genju" 戲劇美的根據 (Standards of Dramatic Aesthetics)

1.31 "Xiju yu qinggan yiru" 戲劇與情感移入 (Drama and Empathy)

2.7 "Huanqi qunzhong de yiqing fanying" 喚起觀眾的移情反應 (Arousing Audience's Empathy Response)

2.14 "Yiqing fanying de chuandao (xia)" 移情反應的傳導 (下) (The Transmission of Empathy Response II)

2.28 "Youxiao de yu youhai de yiqing fanying" 有效的與有害的移情反應 (Effective

and Harmful Empathy Response)

3.7 “Xiju yu mei de juli (shang)” 戲劇與美的距離（上） (Drama and the Aesthetic Distance I)

3.14 “Mei de juli yu xiju” 美的距離與戲劇（下） (The Aesthetic Distance and Drama II)

3.21 “Taikuang yu di si bi” 台框與第四壁 (Stage Frame and the Fourth Wall)

3.28 “Zai wutai shang de cuojue” 在舞台上的錯覺 (Illusion on Stage)

4.4 “Cuoju de jianli yu pohuai” 錯覺的建立與破壞 (The Establishment and Destruction of Illusion)

4.18 “Juben yu daoyan” 劇本與導演 (Drama Scripts and Directors)

5.2 “Goutu keti zhong de 'mudi' yu 'zhuti'” 構圖課題中的“目的”與“主題” (“Purpose” and “Theme” in Framing)

5.9 “Goutu keti zhong zhi cai” 構圖課題中之材 (Materials in Framing)

5.16 “Jiegou shang de tongyi” 結構上的統一 (Unification of Structure)