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Modern China

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fitting for a revolutionary era, what then is the meaning of the lyrical in the epical revolutionary vortex? This quest has led Wang to give lectures and write books on the meaning of what he calls "lyrical history" (*youqing de lishi*).

Rereading the polemical exchange between Průšek and Hsia more than half a century after that momentous event, I can only agree with Marian Galik (1933–), one of Průšek's disciples from Bratislava, that in this debate "there was no winner and loser"; rather, it has encouraged younger generations of scholars to plow the field further and explore newer methodologies. We should all be grateful to these two giants of the field. They have both achieved scholarly immortality. May their spirits rest in peace.

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LEO OU-FAN LEE

1963 · MARCH 17

Fu Lei: "Intellectually I'm purely Chinese, but emotionally and instinctively I'm very much like a westerner."

Fu Lei and Fou Ts'ong:

Cultural Cosmopolitanism and Its Price

On the morning of September 9, 1966, not long after the onset of the Cultural Revolution, Fu Lei (1908–1966) penned his will, and then he and his wife, Zhu Meifu (1913–1966), hung themselves. In a coldly objective manner, he detailed how their belongings should be handled, and very

briefly denied their "crimes" against their country and people. As the most famous translator-cum-literatus of the time, Fu knew the worth of his words.

Among the countless intellectuals purged in this chaotic movement, Fu represented a somewhat special case. He could have survived, but apparently he chose not to. The solemn poise Fu demonstrated at his last moment showed that his suicide was less forced than decided on out of free will. There was a self-conscious magnanimity in him about the inevitability of his destiny, which made his death Socratic. His death was not just a personal tragedy but also an intensified symbol of the cultural-political conflict in twentieth-century China.

Like many Shanghai cosmopolitan intellectuals in the first half of the century, Fu was steeped in the aesthetic and moral values of various traditions, but firmly anchored himself in Chinese culture. His interpretations shed a typically Chinese light on European texts, paintings, and music; enrich the expression of both cultures; and unveil their surprising parallels. As Fu describes, "Intellectually I'm purely Chinese, but emotionally and instinctively I'm very much like a westerner." With the help of his cultural cosmopolitanism, he found home not in any geographical location but in the many cultures with which he identified. When he was uprooted from this home, he fought at the cost of his life.

Born in 1908 in Shanghai, Fu was sensitive, lonely, and aloof from early on. After a rebellious and politically active period at the Jesuit-founded Collège Saint Ignace, he traveled to France in 1928 to study art theory and French literature at the Université de Paris; however, he returned to China in 1931 without receiving a degree. On this journey he was accompanied by the French Sinologist and musicologist Louis Laloy (1874–1944), author of *Mirror of China*. This journey marked the end of Fu's formal education.

Today his most influential work remains the Chinese rendition of Romain Rolland's (1866–1944) Beethoven-inspired *Jean-Christophe*, a work now almost forgotten in its native land. This is a striking example of world literature that gains rather than loses in translation. But in his typical meticulous manner, Fu reworked the entire book a few years later, managing to improve the already brilliant first version. He also translated fifteen of Honoré de Balzac's (1799–1850) novels, and works by Voltaire

(1694–1778) and Prosper Mérimée (1803–1870). His art of translation combined scholarly precision with literary sensitivity. Borrowing a metaphor from traditional Chinese painting, he stated that his philosophy was to translate the “spirit” rather than the “appearance” of the original. Fu often had a deeply personal connection with the works he translated. The translations of Rolland’s *Jean-Christophe* and *Beethoven*, for example, were products of youthful passion. The translation of Hippolyte Taine’s (1828–1893) monumental *Philosophy of Art*, on the other hand, provided a consolation for the aging and isolated scholar threatened by political perversity. Fu’s deep emotional investment explains why so many readers have found his translations deeply spiritual and touching. Today, Fu is still remembered mainly as one of the greatest translators of modern China.

However, his reputation as a translator overshadows his versatile career as a critic of literature, art, and music, and as a curator. Fu fashioned himself as a “critic of art.” Indeed, for him, translating literary texts was only part of a much broader transculturation project. A nonexhaustive list of his activities shows not only the diversity of his interests but also a cosmopolitan vision that endeavored to bring Western and Chinese cultures into dialogue while retaining an acute awareness of their subtle differences.

He published widely on French and English writers, as well as on literary history and theory. He translated Rolland’s *Tolstoy* and corresponded with the author. He befriended the French comparatist René Étiemble (1909–2002), who would send his latest books to Fu and later would attend Fu’s pianist son Fou Ts’ong’s (Fu Cong, 1934–) recitals in Paris. He was also an active member of the circle of Shanghai cultural elites that included Qian Zhongshu (1910–1998), Yang Jiang (1911–2016), Ke Ling (1909–2000), and Stephen C. Soong (Song Qi, 1919–1996), a close friend of Eileen Chang (1920–1995) who would become the executor of her literary estate. One highlight of Fu’s literary career is an insightful essay on Chang’s fiction—so insightful that it prompted the usually haughty fiction writer to publish a serious response. Chang was to reconsider Fu’s criticism and at least partially agree with it three decades later.

In the field of art history, he prepared twenty lectures for his art history course at Shanghai Art College, covering artists from the Renaissance, the baroque period, classicism, and romanticism all the way to the Barbizon school. Despite his love for Western culture, however, Fu’s

most important contribution to this field is surprisingly his consistent advocacy of the traditionally inclined landscape painter Huang Binhong (1865–1955). When Huang was already seventy-four, Fu curated his first-ever solo exhibition, at a time when the now-canonized painter was still much neglected.

Fu’s aesthetic sensitivity is even more emphatically expressed in his music criticism, a “translation” that goes beyond the ordinary linguistic rendition of something written in a foreign language. He translated Rolland’s *Beethoven*, published concert reviews, and wrote biographical notes and criticism on Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827), Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791), Frédéric Chopin (1810–1849), and Claude Debussy (1862–1918). He spent much effort tutoring his son Fou, who won third prize and the Special Mazurka Prize at the 1955 Chopin Competition in Poland. However, Fu was denounced during the 1958 Anti-Rightist Movement for his criticism of the government. This “crime” threatened both the father and the son, forcing Fou to permanently leave China and settle in the United Kingdom. In a 1980 interview, Fou described his situation at that time as follows: “All signs told me that I stood no chance, and I was especially scared because in this case it wasn’t only myself but also my father.”

Fou made a sensational debut in London, and soon established himself as a first-class musician, counting Yehudi Menuhin (1916–1999) and Hermann Hesse (1877–1962) as his admirers. From 1954 till Fu’s death in 1966, the father wrote nearly two hundred letters to his son, containing extensive comments on art and literature. These letters were no dry sermons, but were instead the sole vehicle for intimate confessions of a father and a person of integrity at a time of universal hypocrisy and extreme political pressure. The two were each other’s soul mates, finding consolation in the values they both cherished. Fu reminded his son that he should first and foremost be a human being in the best sense of the word; to be an artist came second, to be a musician came third, and to be a pianist came last. In a letter to his younger son Fu Min, Fu Lei quoted Fou as saying that his ideal personality was to be “at the same time passionate and serene, profound and simple, affectionate and proud, subtle and straightforward.” Indeed, this is the most precise description of Fu Lei. These letters were published posthumously as *Fu Lei’s Family Letters*, and they have had a deep influence on rehabilitating the values shattered by the Cultural Revolution.

A touching testimony to the friendship between father and son is preserved in the sixty-thousand-word manuscript of the chapter on Greek sculpture in Taine's *Philosophy of Art* that Fu copied in exquisite calligraphy for the London-based Fou. The latter wrote,

After reading Taine, I am more convinced of my opinion that [George Frideric] Handel's works, especially his oratorios, are the closest to the Hellenistic spirit in music. He had a natural sense of bliss, majestic poetry, simplicity, and was never vulgar; his expression was straightforward, proud and magnificent, attaining an ecstasy and impersonality almost on a physical level.

Fu Lei replied, "I already anticipated your excitement upon reading this chapter. A time like that [of the Hellenistic era] is completely gone, just like one's naïve and lovely childhood, or our Pre-Qin [before 221 BCE], Jin, and Six Dynasties [220–589 CE] eras."

Deeply hurt by the Anti-Rightist Movement in 1958, Fu embarked on a translation of Taine as an act of silent resistance. Because he was denounced, this work that cost him so much effort could not be published under his name, and Fu preferred to withdraw it rather than publish it using a pseudonym.

In a 1965 letter, Fu commented,

For so many years, I have often told Mom that the more I study Western culture, the more I feel the beauty of Chinese culture; it resonates much more strongly with my temperament. The moment I fell in love with Chinese painting was when I was in my early twenties, studying Western painting in the Louvre.

No wonder Fu eventually found the full realization of his ideal in Huang Binhong. For Fu, Huang represented the creative essence of Chinese painting because he declared the expressive power of the calligraphic line as its central tenet, rather than mimesis. This in turn enabled Fu to put Chinese art in dialogue with the antimimetic, nonfigurative, and two-dimensional nature of the European modernist movement. Fu's description of Western art was accurate and scholarly, but his judgments, Chinese.

Fou interprets European classical music in the same vein. As an act of anthologizing, he selects his repertoire with a Chinese taste. The fact that he champions Handel (1685–1759) over Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) and Mozart over Beethoven, and that he counts Domenico Scarlatti (1685–1757), Franz Peter Schubert (1797–1828), Chopin, and Debussy as his favorites, may seem off the mainstream for Western audiences, but his choices make perfect sense if one considers his Chinese taste—one that emphasizes a humane, subtle, and lyrical sensibility over religiosity, abstraction, and transcendence. Even within the oeuvre of Beethoven, he always favors the lyrical repertoire. These judgments, having a profound cultural resonance, come naturally from his temperament more than from his education. Fu and Fou realized the same cultural vision. The only difference is that what for the father was a conversion is for the son something innate.

For both of them, there were consistent aesthetic principles determining why certain works of art were preferred to others. For Fu, Huang's seemingly traditional brushwork was more avant-garde in its suggestive abstraction than the pseudomodernist or half-classicist, half-proletarian styles of other contemporary Chinese artists. For Fou, Chopin had an infallible sense of taste that his admirer Sergei Rachmaninoff managed to approach only with a kitschy imitation. What these judgments share in common is the importance of taste—not in Immanuel Kant's (1724–1804) sense, but in accordance with the value system established in classical Chinese poetics regarding the depth and integrity of emotion, as well as the economy of expression. It is necessary to add that this system applies not only to the judgment of art but also to persons; both Fu and Fou loved *A New Account of the Tales of the World*, the fifth-century collection of anecdotes of self-styled literati and intellectuals. However, nothing is more distant from both father and son than cultural chauvinism. Quite the contrary, one finds in them a cosmopolitanism that fully recognizes and appreciates the values of different traditions. Their own tastes, deeply rooted in Chinese culture, only serve to enrich the expression of foreign cultures.

Today Fu is remembered mainly as a translator; this reputation has prevented people from recognizing the full range of his cosmopolitan vision. Apart from the fact that his translations have been immensely influential, there is another reason why he is known as a translator: his career was eclectic but fragmentary, and presented a mode of intellectual engagement that is difficult to define. Staying away from the establishment

and choosing not to become any kind of professional, he retained the aura of a mandarin connoisseur. He was independent and unyielding in the self-fashioning of his life and career. But he nonetheless managed to exercise an influence too important to be ignored.

Fu's death was not simply the result of being critical of the government; nor was it accidental. It was the result of a clash that challenged the cultural values shared by him and his cosmopolitan contemporaries like Qian Zhongshu and Eileen Chang. But Fu had such a firm conviction about his values that he was ready to give up cosmopolitanism for indigenous adherence. On the other hand, Fou has chosen to cling to cosmopolitanism at the price of being an expatriate. To borrow Walter Benjamin's (1892–1940) words, this was a time of rivalry between fascist aestheticization of politics and communist politicization of art. Fu could not be tolerated by either paradigm, and he chose suicide to assert his integrity. In comparison, the still-difficult survival of their many contemporaries through the turmoil of the time seems almost a cynical compromise.

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GUANGCHEN CHEN

1964

The East Is Red—or is it?

The "Red Pageant" and China's First Atomic Bomb

The legend goes that in 1943, during the War of Resistance against Japan, Li Youyuan (1903–1955), a peasant folk singer from Shaanxi Province, adapted a rustic local love tune into an early version of what is now known as "The East Is Red" in order to express his gratitude toward the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) headed by Mao Zedong (1893–1976). His nephew, Li Yuanzhen, popularized the song at local

gatherings, and composers in Yan'an, then headquarters of the CCP, added three verses. The lyrics begin:

The East is red
The sun has risen
Mao Zedong has appeared in China
He is devoted to the people's welfare
He-er-hai-yo
He is the people's great savior.

After its 1944 publication in *Liberation Daily* in Yan'an, the song spread far and wide in CCP-controlled areas. Further polished with the professional touch of musicians and composers, "The East Is Red" became one of the most popular chorus songs after the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and replaced the conventional collective singing of "The Internationale," for example, at the opening ceremony of the First Congress of the Literary and Artistic Workers in Beijing in 1950.

In the ensuing years of dwindling freedom of expression, "The East Is Red" was a constant refrain at mass gatherings and public performances, culminating in its role as the theme song to the 1964 revolutionary music-and-dance epic, also entitled *The East Is Red*. The epic begins with a prologue in which seventy graceful dancers in long, blue silk dresses wave silk sunflowers in time to "The East Is Red" toward a red sun projected onto the stage backdrop. With elegance and tenderness, these "sunflowers" walk toward the radiant sun rising from the ocean, symbolizing the guiding leadership of the CCP over the masses. The effect of the song, the beauty of the choreography, and spectacle of the *mise-en-scène* reinforces the "red sun" allegory of Mao as the indispensable leader of the Chinese masses.

Premiered on the occasion of the fifteenth anniversary of the founding of the PRC, this grand revolutionary epic narrated the glorious history of the CCP, from its birth in 1921 to its victory during the civil war against the Nationalists in 1949. Drawing from the rich aesthetic heritage of China's traditional, folkloric, popular, leftist, and socialist cultures, *The East Is Red* was a "living textbook" of party history that would have long-lasting effects on contemporary Chinese performance culture. On October 10, 1964, Premier Zhou Enlai (1898–1976) announced the successful explosion of China's first atomic bomb when he received the cast of *The East*