Bing Xin Studies in the English Speaking World: A Critical Survey

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中文摘要：英语世界的冰心文学研讨，也同五四以来的中国文学评论界认识一样，存在着某些分歧与疑虑，从夏志清与曹实庵早期观点相左的评论到后几十年来学者的深入探索研究，大致形成一条对冰心文学由低估至重视、再认识的线路，对冰心文学反映出来的女性意识与世界性（包括其“反东方主义”、反父权男权统治意识）以及文学修辞学方面的创新努力，多有发扬揭示。虽然这不是一门“显学”，但英语世界的冰心研究，绵延悠长，多能令人耳目一新，发人深思，从而打开更多的话语空间。论文首次较系统地梳理了这方面的内容。

In the sinology of the English speaking world, or rather, the research field of modern Chinese literature, Hsia Chih-tsing is regarded as "the chief authority in the research circle of Modern Chinese literature in America" [1] and one of the pioneers for this field as well. His famous monograph A History of Modern Chinese Fiction (one translated by Liu Shao ming into Chinese name “中国现代小说史”) came off the press time and again since the 1960s, which has been evaluated by young scholars like Leo Ou-fan as: “it has really opened up a new frontier and reduced many barriers to further similar studies in America. And we all benefit from Hsia Chih-tsing's work.” [2] The works by Hsia Chih-tsing contain many new ideas, most of which are quite opposed to other scholars’, leaving much to be further developed by his agreed writers such as Qian Zhongshu, Zhang Tianyi, Zhang Ailing, Shen Congwen, etc. However, some writers are not appraised by Hsia Chih-tsing, such as some writers from Left-wing camp or from Zuolian camp. Fortunately, Bing Xin literature can be found in certain special topic discussions, which indicates some unbypassable significance in the studies of Bing Xin literature. It is understandable that a separate chapter is not listed for the discussion of Bing Xin literature because
the focus is upon the history of novel genres. However, before making comments on
“problem novels” by Bing Xin, it is imprudent for Mr Hsia to make the history of
novel genres at random or take it for granted to do such. For instance, he once
acclaimed:

What Bing Xin represents is the melancholy tradition of Chinese literature. Even
if literary revolution did not taken place, she would still become an outstanding
poetess and essayist. Nonetheless, she might have obtained more achievements and
created more works in the old tradition. [1]

Leaving the disparity of esthetics aside, the above-mentioned statement by Mr
Hsia is in conflict with his own assumption, indicating certain confusion and
estrangement about cognitive system. For instance, he once commented: “ [...] these novels are filled with enchanting praise for the moon, the star and the maternal
love, which are the works full of emotional abuse.” [4] Later on, Mr Hsia
commented again: “Though not a fruitful writer, Bing Xin deserves to enjoy an
important position among the writers of the first period. Though her poems and essays
are subject to melancholy due to lack of realistic framework, some of her short fictions
with unique styles are not infected by the fetish and fanaticism in which she was at
that time.” [5] These conflicts and superficial opinions are not needed to be
hypercriticized nowadays because they were just yielded out at the turn of the 1950s
and 1960s in which there were few studies or introductions of Modern Chinese
literature in the English speaking world. And thereby, it is also reasonable and
natural to affirm Mr Hsia’s achievements in this field and even to turn to his tentative
and uncontemplated views about Bing Xin for reference.

The purpose of pointing out the aforementioned problems is to elicit what
follows. We may say that the focus of researches on Bing Xin in English speaking
world is upon rectifying Mr Hsia’s views about Bing Xin and upon expounding Bing
Xin’s historical status, literary style, modern significance and cosmopolitanism, forming
a academic chain or even a brilliant landscape about the studies of Bing Xin, just as
David Der-wei Wang, a famous professor in Harvard university, put it after reading
Mr Hsia’s studies of Bing Xin: “ Only after assimilating or criticizing Mr Hsia’s
arguments, can the following scholars bring forth new ideas and create a new mode of
study of Bing Xin.” [6] It should be so indeed if one wants to quote references of
studies of Bing Xin in English speaking world. And David Der-wei Wang makes a
direct comment after prefacing Mr Hsia’s work,
sexists may point out and analyze the deficiency of the argumentation about the issues of women and sex in the works by Mr Hsia; experts of the school of deconstruction may stress the blind spots contained in the argument of the works by Mr Hsia and lacks self-awareness; post-colonialists may make much out of the critical discussions made by "the First World" which is relied upon by the whole book; cultural pluralists may also attack Mr Hsia’s great favor to Western canon. \[7\]

Because Mr Hsia is the first one doing the researches into Bing Xin, there unavoidably exist certain weak points or deficiencies about his researches, thus provoking many attacks or criticisms from other scholars. Anyhow, Hsia Chih-tsing should be regarded as the pioneer of the researches on Bing Xin in that he, from the perspective of study, wrote out and explored Bing Xin’s literary achievements and made comments upon them in detail.

Interestingly, there is another famous Czechoslovakian sinologist named Jaroslav Prusek who is a leading specialist in Modern Chinese literature and enjoys the same popularity with Hsia Chih-tsing. When Mr Hsia’s work was coming out, Jaroslav Prusek was a teacher in Harvard University, and he, more often than not, delineated or explored Chinese literature, was a “bilingual” writer. Prusek wrote out a long paper entitled “Basic Problems of the History of Modern Chinese Literature—A Comment on ‘A History of Modern Chinese Fiction’” in which he criticized Mr Hsia’s work severely as “dogmatic bias and irreverential attitude”, “distorted evaluation”, “hasty” and “unfair”, or regarded Mr Hsia’s work as against historical facts and literary laws. However, Prusek’s criticism as rebutted by Mr Hsia in his equally long paper. \[8\] Though this polemic between Mr Hsia and Prusek in the journal called Toung Pao was indecisive, yet it gave some enlightenment to the late studies. What was more, it elicits special attention from scholars (academic circle) to Modern Chinese literature. In this polemic, Prusek expressed some important ideas: for instance, “The literary lyricism of literati embodied in the classic poetry is a lasting heritage, which shapes the literary sense of the writers in the period of May Fourth Movement” [9], and “texts should be set into the social and historical context in which these texts are produced so as to have these texts understood much better” [10]. If we transfer these views to study Bing Xin, it is very advisable. As to the two academic views, ways and schools represented by Hsia Chih-Tsing and Prusek respectively, Leo Ou-fan made the following narration:

I was really lucky to be a student of the two scholars opposing reciprocally
(they became friends later on). Since then, I sought to follow these two great scholars in the academic fields: Prusek's historical consciousness and Hsia's literary judgement. [11].

Early in the 1930s and 1940s, Prusek was very active in Chinese literary circle (he was very familiar with Mao Dun, Zheng Zhenduo, Qian Xingcun, etc.), and he expounded many interviews about a series of famous writers in Czech, among which the interview about Bing Xin made up the most. According to the famous European (Czech) sinologist Marian Galik who is a student of Prusek, Prusek often met Bing Xin, and was one of the foreigners in the party held in Bing Xin’s house; besides, Prusek was very familiar with Bing Xin’s husband named Wu Wenzao. Prusek thought that Bing Xin literature “was actually crystallized by an old art, an old emotional field and a creative method, [...] was sentimental and lovely, but not beyond her narrow life circle” [12]. Prusek, who has certain idea of humanities in the Western Maxism and shows sympathy for leftist literature, does not make a thorough research into Bing Xin literature and shows some regrets at his research, which is perhaps quite different from the purpose of Hsia Chih-tsing’s following ideas and different from his research approach; nonetheless, about the limitations of understanding as well as the queries, rectification, and argumentation by the latter sinologists in the English speaking world, the two great scholars seem to have achieved the same purpose by different research approaches, which not only gives certain enlightenment to the later studies of Bing Xin, but unavoidably becomes a target for later studies, and this is a very common phenomenon in the increasingly deep studies in that, after all, “the time is different” and, logic and rational thinking can be found in the refinement of discipline and system of knowledge.

The following are discussed in terms of several aspects with a view to letting us know the major achievements and the research focusing on the studies of Bing Xin in English speaking world in the past three decades or so, and then make certain comments on them.

I. Recognizing the Stable Theme, Lasting Significance and Revoicing of the New Ideas

Bing Xin’s works has given rise to controversy since her works gained popularity, and many famous writers such as Mao Dun, Cheng Fangwu, Xi Ying, and even her bosom friend Liang Shiqiu, expressed their regrets and dissatisfaction with the theme of Bing Xin’s works; nonetheless, they had to admit Bing Xin’s popularity and the
unique style, quality and influence of her works. "Bing Xin is a great writer who speaks highly of 'love'. She herself is like a spider, and her philosophy is: with the love of 'nature' as longitude and the love of mother and baby child as latitude, the silk she spins is woven into a mass of network where she sets her life in the middle, and this is the basis for all her works—there are no other words which are better than Bing Xin's to describe 'love' successfully and completely!" [13]

Most of the criticisms at that time were informal and bore certain limitations such as knowing conflict and political utility except that the criticism by Mao Dun was rational and professional. Owing to distance and academics, re-exploration into Bing Xin in English speaking world tended to be academics-oriented, which can be found in long papers (including dissertations) and its research methods were systematic, objective and clear; and all of these not only questioned the conclusions by previous scholars but argued against these conclusions, which showed that these impartial academic pursuit and research were open-minded and insightful.

Wei Yanmei from State University of New York adduced Bing Xin as the first example in her doctoral dissertation Femininity and Mother-daughter Relationships in Twentieth-century Chinese Literature [14] to explore and compare the subjective awareness of Chinese women writers in twentieth-century and expose mother-daughter Relationships and literary theme of kinship. As to the criticisms of Bing Xin by former scholars, a commentator once remarked:

The main complaint about Bing Xin, I think, is that she writes incessantly and passionately about such "feminine" topics as maternal love, innocence of the child, and beauty of nature—subjects that sound suspiciously utopian and escapist. Her works, thought beautiful and exquisite in style, do not come up to the rigor and gravity of the masterpieces of the time. It is worth mentioning that almost all the writers in the May Fourth literary canon are male, with the exception of perhaps Ding Ling, whose writings dealt with a very different group of women and subject matters than Bing Xin. Such criticisms, however, do not do justice to a writer with a strong social conscience who participated in the May Fourth movement with a genuine desire to change society and bring happiness to the masses. Nor are they a fair critique of Bing Xin's opus. Most importantly, in my opinion, they reflect a certain gender bias in the cultural assessment of literary productions. [15]

With regard to its thematic significance, the commentator made a further analysis:
Lu Xun once remarked that "love" and "sincerity" are the two things that are most missing from the Chinese culture. Bing Xin, while keenly aware of the problems facing the young May Fourth intellectuals, wants to use maternal love as a prototype for a more humane society and culture. [...] What Bing Xin tries to do, is to offer maternal love as the panacea for social alienation and evils. She obviously hopes that the new family model she champions in her writings could be adopted nationwide and provide some remedy to the troubled nation. Bing Xin disapproves of the social indifference expounded by the superman philosophy. In her works the power of the motherly protection extends to both the daughter and the son. It is exalted as the force that inspires and cultivating humanity. Bing Xin has been criticized for her writings about love and childhood, since these subjects, in an era of social and political chaos, were considered as too far removed from the reality. I'd like to argue that compared with the hate philosophy, which approved of the isolation from humanity and escape from reality, Bing Xin engaged reality through propagandizing the virtue of maternal love and the model family. \[16\]

Wang Bo from the University of Arizona held the similar opinion in his doctoral dissertation *Inventing a Discourse of Resistance: Rhetorical Women in Early Twentieth-century China*:

Bing Xin saw maternal love as a symbol of a universal love she believed to be the foundation of the universe. Her paean of maternal love is in essence a different approach to reflecting on women's painful experiences and the causes of their suffering. Instead of offering an explicit political critique of society, Bing Xin attended more to using a moral philosophy as a way to solve social problems. Although her approach sounds less radical, in a patriarchal society in which every cultural activity was designed for men, Bing Xin's representation of women and children from a female perspective itself is an anti-feudalist action. In the Chinese cultural context, by extolling the beauty of nature, Bing Xin expresses her own personality and emotions as an individual, which reinforces the new cultural values celebrating individuality and liberty. \[17\]

The spirit of the times and feminist thought revealed in the "love of philosophy" have been fully realized and expounded, and this is not just beyond realization by those critics after May Fourth Movement; besides, it is an obvious misunderstanding that, as is mentioned above in Hsia Chih-tsing's comment on literature, Bing Xin would have obtained more achievements if she had lived in ancient times and that Prosek thought Bing Xin literature was "an old art", confining herself to her own
narrow circle. Comparatively speaking, based on high criteria, these academic criticisms in English by later scholars are from the deep and full exploration into the original writings, which, as a matter of fact, represents the achievements after the emergence of the literary school of Anglo-American "New Criticism" and the influence of the Western feminist thought, and when they are applied to the research field of Bing Xin literature, the academic awareness is apparently more explicit, broader and acuter, which, accordingly, gives people new understandings and meanings from explanation of or exploration into Bing Xin literature, thus refreshing and enlightening people in rethinking Bing Xin literature. More over,

Bing Xin's essays reflect her literary theory. In her lyrical essays, she fully expresses her individual personality as a female writer and sets up a model of the individualized new literature. Shen Congwen, a prominent modern fiction writer, pointed out that when we read Bing Xin's work, "it is easy to find the author's individual personality and her beautiful soul as a female". Bing Xin's essays also reflect her philosophy of love which was centered on maternal love, childlike innocence and beauty of nature. By depicting women and children's lives, her essays spread feminist ideas and advocated women and children's rights. In the May Fourth period, the Chinese new rhetoric was aimed at criticizing the Confucian feudal ethics and helping the people to achieve an "independent character." The new literature, as important discursive strategies, was employed to spread the new ideas that value individuality, freedom, and gender equality. [18]

Earlier, Mao Dun once thought that the theme of philosophy of love by Bing Xin was divorced from reality, just like rubber suit on one's body, with certain estrangement from the worldly life, thus getting nowhere in our daily life. And besides, this point is also questioned and set right in several papers about the studies of Bing Xin literature in English speaking world, for example:

In almost all her essays composed in the May Fourth period, Bing Xin intended to advocate a philosophy of love—a view of the world that integrates traditional Chinese Philosophy, Christian ideas, and pantheism. In essence Bing Xin's philosophy of love is a moral philosophy or a pursuit of an ideal human character. In her essays she explored the positive aspects in human relations and attempted to use love to influence the reader so that they could act and change the dark and corrupted society. [19]

In addition, Sally made the following discussion as well in the book The Mother
Bing Xin, as a pioneer of these newly available forms of participation-writing, exemplifies some of the difficulties the idealization of the mother posed for women. Having responded through her writing to the general call to cultivate maternal virtues, Bing Xin was momentarily celebrated but soon rejected as the New Literary movement sought to dissociate itself from its early subjective and sentimentality. [...] While the contributions that leading male figures like Ye Shengtao and Lu Xun made to the May-Fourth-era celebration of motherhood have been long forgotten, the historical record has preserved a vague memory of the phenomenon in the long-discredited “philosophy of love”, it attributes to Bing Xin. [20]

Re-study, re-evaluation and exploration of social theme and feminist perspective of Bing Xin literature is a bright and creative spot of cognitive aspect about studies of Bing Xin, which reminds us of the exclamation by Czech sinologist, Marian Galik, in the 1980s: A poem by Bing Xin “is a cold heart, and can create a more subtle world” (the 57th piece of poem from A Maze of Stars). As expected, she is more sensible, more persistent, more predictive and have more clear opinions than her contemporaries, or even some big influential persons, and besides, she was not controlled by the overspread ideas at her day, and this was why, as mentioned in A History of Modern Chinese Fiction, Hsia Chih-tsing had to admire that Bing Xin was an independent female writer who was not controlled by the trend of her times. Earlier, Mao Dun explicated the theme of Bing Xin literature by quoting France’s proverb: “Irony and pity are good advisors: the former has a smile which can make life nice and lovely; the latter’s tears can let life holy and solemn.” Once, Mao Dun asked himself— “Do ‘smile’ and ‘tear’ from Bing Xin contain deeper symbolic meanings besides their literal meanings?” [21] Unfortunately, this was not to be further investigated, which showed some uncertainties and hesitations at that time. (There have been such hesitations or contradictions as to the comments upon Bing Xin since the May Fourth Movement.) Nevertheless, this theme and its symbolic meanings find full expressions in the studies of Bing Xin in the English speaking world. And we can also find the special “severely cold smile” implied in her early poem (1922):

If I am a writer,
I only wish that
when my works goes into his mind,
it is very usual and oblivious, without anything to say:

passing by like water,
unlaudable,
and even unworthy to be criticized;
Nonetheless, in his life,
when misery or happiness draws near,
he then considers dimly
the situation seems to have been depicted in someone’s words!
Then I will shed happy tears.
—If I am a Writer

It seems that she quite surely had proper foreknowledge of or confidence in her own evaluation. Bing Xin literature and its theme does not fade away with the time passing by; however, many creative meanings can be incessantly elicited or expounded from them, which influences one generation after another and which has also gained much attention and obtained further elucidation in the sinological studies in the English speaking world, namely, just like Bing Xin’s own prediction in the above-mentioned poem, which is based on a belief of life and aesthetic judgment.

This kind of re-evaluation or re-emphasis of the theme of Bing Xin literature can be found in the following works or dissertations: Two Chinese Modern Women—A Study of Bing Xin and Ding Ling by Anderson Crainer in Claremont Graduate School, Gender Politics in Modern China: Writing and Feminism by Barlow, professor from History Department in Rice University of USA, Asian Literary Voices: From Marginal to Mainstream by Philip F. Williams, professor of Chinese language and literature of Mansfield Center in Montana University, Women and Writing in Modern China by Larson, etc.

II. Experimenting with the Advanced Meaning of Rhetorics Revealed in Practice

High praise is sung for the artistic achievements attempted firstly in the new stylistic awareness and vernacular of Bing Xin literature, which was seldom touched upon by early critics. For instance, “Her words are, indeed, occidentalized words as well as words changed from vernacular to ancient Chinese, which contain a special charm and flavor, or a special elegance and coherence, quite different from the writing style from that of A Dream of Red Mansions and Water Margin in that she has made the Chinese vernacular Europeanized!” compared with the evaluations of
Western papers in the English speaking world, the early evaluations by Chinese scholars are just made on a whim or just "sporadic", not as English papers evaluate Bing Xin literature thoroughly and comprehensively in a macro-narration way and from a professional aspect. For instance, Wang Bo (transliteration from English) made the following remarks:

As a pioneer of vernacular Chinese, Bing Xin composed a large number of elegant and poetic essays that disarmed the prejudice against the vernacular. That Bing Xin's many lyrical essays have been included in the textbooks of elementary and middle schools since the 1920s shows her influence in the development of the new written language. Like Lu Yin, Bing Xin employed new literary genres including essays, fiction, and poetry to explore various societal issues, especially issues related to women and children. Her works opened up a new area of women's and children's literature by broadening the range of subject matter in modern literature. Although there were women writing in history, women could not publish their work and few had written fiction and essays. Historically, there was almost no literature written specially for children. In the May Fourth period, women and children's issues caught more and more attention in the society; consequently, literary works reflecting women and children's life gradually came into being. Bing Xin's Xiaopinwen (lyrical essays) such as "Ji Xiaoduzhe" (To Children Readers) and "Wangshi" (Past Events) not only expressed a women's feeling and life but also were written for children. In a patriarchal society, Bing Xin depicted women and children and expressed their feelings and wishes from their perspectives, which is a courageous challenge against the traditional patriarchal culture. Compared with Lu Yin, Bing Xin was less explicit in her writings in terms of advocating feminist ideas. Yet the themes of women's education and liberation as well as children's independent character in her works reflect her feminist orientation. Furthermore, Bing Xin's unique feminine style in her vernacular prose influenced many writers of the next generation, which is in itself a protest against a culture entrenched with masculine values. These discursive practices, I argue, disrupted the dominant patriarchal discourse and spread the new culture. Thus, Bing Xin's literary work was a significant contribution to the Chinese new rhetoric. 

While Bing Xin tended to express feminist ideas in an implicit way, her experiment with the vernacular in her fiction and essays made her a courageous pioneer in the language reform—a reform that would impact the Chinese culture in many different ways in later years. As discussed in Chapter Two, one important
aspect of the Chinese new rhetoric is its emphasis on the use of vernacular; Bing Xin creatively used the vernacular and formed her unique style, which is in itself a discursive mode to spread the new ideologies and transform the traditional culture. In fact, Bing Xin’s elegant feminine prose style could be viewed as an effective strategy to inscribe women’s power through literary influence; thus, Bing Xin as a stylist and writer helped create a new discourse resistant to the dominant ideology. \[27\]

And in the context of my study, she is importance for another reason; she illustrates what many Chinese rhetoricians found difficult to accomplish—the creative innovation of a new rhetorical means that revives the national culture in the cross-cultural rhetorical encounter. \[28\]

The researches into Bing Xin’s “macroscopical narration” and the discoursive meaning in terms of rhetorics which, quite different and creative, influence the whole cognition and mores of that era are seldom found in Chinese papers before of mainland China. From the above-mentioned extracts, we may know that Bing Xin’s works and their relevant evaluations and results have stood the test of time (the case is that Bing Xin’s works have had many editions and been selected to Chinese textbooks since ninety years ago) and have assumed cognitive doctrines and great significance in many people’s mind. The exploration into it by English works may be “well-intentioned” and “seems to be very significant”.

Other scholars’ papers about Bing Xin in the English speaking world make almost the same discussions and have similar reflections. For instance, the influence upon stylistic awareness of “Bing Xin Style” and its demeanor has been fully discussed. Because of the salient penetrating influence of Western context and modernity, those explorations into artistic dimensions of literary language and, esp. the revelation of elements constructing Bing Xin literature (essays with new genres) are complementary, intertextual and interactive to the studies of Bing Xin in Chinese circle, or even a kind of expansion and enrichment of studies of Bing Xin, just as Leo Ou-fan put it, “I think new literature is a kind of metamorphosis, and great changes have taken place in a writer’s writing in terms of language and perspective. From this perspective, personally, what I did is not enough.” \[29\] If there exists such an awareness, there must be certain unconventional findings and researches. And the “metamorphosis” of Chinese literature represented by “Bing Xin Style” assumes “great changes” of language, which does not mean that living in ancient times is much better nor confining to “her own narrow circle as well” and to “an old art” is a kind of deconstruction and rectification to the opinions by former sinologists;
besides, it particularly points out its “modernity”, including thematic meaning, for instance:

Toward this end first I locate Bing Xin as a feminist rhetorician in the early twentieth century China. Then I extrapolate her rhetorical theory from her essays on writing and explore how her literary texts may be read as theorizing a new rhetoric of modernity and as modeling its strategies. I examine her *Wenti Xiaoshuo* (question fiction) and bring out the rhetorical dimension of her fiction. [...]

One important aspect of the Chinese new rhetoric is its emphasis on the use of vernacular; Bing Xin creatively used the vernacular and formed her unique style, which is in itself a discursive mode to spread the new ideologies and transform the traditional culture. In fact, Bing Xin’s elegant feminine prose style could be viewed as an effective strategy to inscribe women’s power through literary influence; thus, Bing Xin as a stylist and writer helped create a new discourse resistant to the dominant ideology. [30]

As the pioneer of modern vernacular essays in the creative period of new literature, Bing Xin made certain initial contributions, which has gained a well-known recognition. Though Hsia Chih-tsing pointed out in his paper that such and such a man (like Ling Shuhua) made more contributions than Bing Xin, it was pointed in many papers that such judgment was biased and indiscreet. Furthermore, the tranquility, calmness and wisdom implied in Bing Xin’s poems have been fully revealed in many long English papers by such scholars as Wei Yantai, Wang Bo, etc. In these papers, the frequently extracted E-C translations from Bing Xin’s works and the views about literary theory from her actually play an important role of publicizing, promoting and enriching Bing Xin literature, making scholars and readers in the English speaking world get more understanding of Bing Xin. These translations are usually made by literary translators; therefore, they are very elegant and graceful, just like a kind of expounding of Bing Xin in another language. For instance, in these translated extracts, some are about the reason why Bing Xin took up her literary career, and some are about Bing Xin’s creative concept of literature. [31] These translated extracts can also illustrate the significant relationship between the unique feature of “Bing Xin Style” and its world nature, public relations and public resources.

Thus, there is a deep social, moral, and spiritual orientation in Bing Xin’s view of writing. As mentioned in Chapter One, in this study of Chinese women’s writing,
I consider rhetoric as including all speech acts people use to persuade, communicate, and inform. From the above analysis, we can see that Bing Xin recognizes the communicative, persuasive, and informative functions of language and also speculates how these functions could be used to promote the common good of a modern society. In this sense, her literary theory could be seen as rhetorical. \[32\]

Such comments are, indeed, refreshing and appropriate; language is not only the crystallization of thought, but the presentation of form and art, and then, from the integration of such two levels, the ideas or concepts by Bing Xin have been expounded in the papers From the English speaking world, which is not only persuasive, but also reminds us of the widespread humanities in the West such as “New Criticism”, “Western Max Literary Theory”, “Feminism” and “Semiotics” since the 21st century.

III. Analysing Bing Xin’s Breakthrough of Regional Boundary towards World Orientation in Respect of Creative Writing and Translation

Liu Xiaoqing from University of South Carolina pointed out directly in his doctoral dissertation Writing as Translating: Modern Chinese Women’s Writing in the Early Twentieth Century that:

My dissertation investigates four works of three modern Chinese women writers and writings in the early twentieth century; namely, Bing Xin’s “Fanxing” and “Chunshui”, Lu Yin’s “Haibing Guren” (Old Friends by the Sea), and Ling Shuhua’s “Ancient Melodies”. My thesis argues that the writings of modern Chinese women writers have features of translation. That is, they are characterized by features of translation. These features refer not necessarily to translation in the conventional sense but rather to forms of imitation, appropriation, transcription, transformation, transference and transmission in a more metaphorical meaning of translation. Writing represents a reciprocal communication between modern Chinese women and the world.

Scholarship in modern Chinese literature has concentrated on the autonomy and subjectivity of the women writers, the autobiographical writing characteristics, and their shared subject matter of personal issues, such as maternal love and romantic love. However, not many researches have made the direct connection of the Chinese women writers with the outside world, especially the west, as the focus of their research. With the perspective of translation, my project contributes to this area with

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the highlight of modern Chinese women writers’ literary and political interactions with Chinese tradition contemporary modern program, and the foreign, especially Western countries.

This chapter mainly deals with the two anthologies of poems, namely, “Fanxing” and “Chunshui” and their relations to “Stray Birds” by Tagore; and I think “Fanxing” and “Chunshui” are “translations” of “Stray Bird”. Through imitation, Bing Xin has learned the poetic form of Tagore; but, what’s more important is that she, by means of appropriation, displays her own creativity and resists the patriarchal and post-colonial trend. “Fanxing” and “Chunshui” not only helps to construct modern poetry, but helps to promote feminist movement. [...] 

Bing Xin rewrites Tagore’s influence with the distinct characteristics of her own environment. Generally speaking, Bing Xin changes the transcendental, abstract, utopian, mystical, and ahistorical atmosphere in “Stray Birds” into a specific, concrete, real, and contextualized one in “Fanxing” and “Chunshui”. [...] Bing Xin breaks the unworldly peace of Tagore’s poems by transplanting Tagore’s characteristics into her own surroundings. 

It is generally assumed in Chinese forum that Bing Xin has been influenced by Tagore’s works such as “Stray Birds” and “The Crescent Moon” in her early years, or even that Bing Xin comes to start her literary career by borrowing Tagore’s literature. In the papers from English speaking world, the word “appropriation” is used to describe Bing Xin’s learning and borrowing from Tagore’s literature, but not a very simple imitation; and her own independence runs through her borrowing, which means a deconstruction of and an escape from Tagore’s “Oriental” colonization, patriarchal society and utopian discursive mode; besides, Bing Xin borrows Tagore’s poems and genres for her own use in a very new way and exalt them into cosmopolitanism, or rather, a kind of recognition of modern values like love, equality and abundance and of an awareness of female autonomy, which is absent in Tagore’s literature. In the process of learning and borrowing, Bing Xin shows her own unique creativity and exploration, free from any authorities. Furthermore, her full delineation and highlight of sea and long voyage as well as “discursive strategy taken as background” are also the specific, fresh and natural embodiments of cosmopolitanism.

Such above-mentioned ideas, as a matter of factor, have gained similar recognition in other European scholars’ reflections. For instance, the Czech sinologist Marian Galik once had a interview with Bing Xin in the early 1980s, during...
which Bing Xin mentioned that she loved "Gitanjali" rather than "The Crescent Moon", and such answer made Galik "very shocked" at that time, from which he came to such cognition and conclusions as "Bing Xin described human world" and "she was the deepest essence all the Christians get". "The universe is not just from her questioning about mental state and feelings, but from her spirit, sense and awareness." [34]

Bing Xin breaks through Orientally enigmatic taste in the context of colonization of Tagore and the discursive mode of patriarchal society and realizes the specific and ideal expectation of love, equality and childishness under the universal ideal of the world, which are the distinctive features revealed in Bing Xin literature, illustrating her real and moving humanistic care. And this can be found in the similar exploration into values and constructive acquirement in the papers from English speaking world.

Actually, Li Zehou and Liu Zaifu living in the USA noticed such orientation and knowledge genealogy, and Li Zehou remarked: "Bing Xin’s simplicity is relevant to the most important and indispensable thing hidden in the depths of Human soul; and in this very definite significance, she is very incisive. [...] What lacks in the Chinese soul, including the whole people’s soul or individual’s soul after decades’ baptism of struggle is just Bing Xin’s simplicity of such. [...] Lu Xun and Bing Xin both show sincere solicitues for life, but their ways of showing solicitues are different.” [35] Liu Zaifu adduced directly the thematic explication of "Save me, My Child!” [36] in his written speech "Approaching towards Bing Xin Every Day" in the International Academic Forum on Bing Xin in Chongqing in the autumn of 2012, and further expounded the cosmopolitanism and human significance implied in the literary theme of Bing Xin.

In the papers from English speaking world, some one locates Bing Xin definitely as "Anti-orientalist", and further analyzed:

Tagore was seen visibly to adopt orientalism in writing or translating his poems into English [...] . With her rewriting and writing, Bing Xin corrects Tagore’s with her Chinese poetics, namely, the May Fourth writing and Chinese classical writing [...] .

Tagore’s "Stray Birds" serves as the primary influence that directly informs "Fanxing" and "Chunshui". Bing Xin imitates both the form and content of "Stray Birds" and appropriates them in her creation of "Fanxing" and "Chunshui". As a result, she formally establishes a new style of poetry; that is, the non-rhymed, freestyled, Chinese vernacular, short poetry of Modern Chinese literature. The two poem
collections were well received upon publication. [...] The short poem writing reached its height in the late 1920s and was overtaken by intellectual poems latter. As the most representative poet of the short poetry writing, Bing Xin marked her place in the development of modern Chinese poetry.

Because “Fanxing” and “Chunshui” are products of imitation and appropriation, and imitation and appropriation are two forms of translation, the perspective of translation provides a vantage point from which to read “Fanxing” and “Chunshui”. It helps recontextualize the two works to their place in world literature. Rather than being strictly confined to the sphere of national literature, the creation of “Fanxing” and “Chunshui” is connected to other literatures. Bing Xin’s poems are not as isolated “originary” as they are commonly claimed to be. Tagore’s “Stray Birds” is their major source, and imitation serves as the fountain head of Bing Xin’s creation of “Fanxing” and “Chunshui”. At the same time, the perspective of translation allows a closer look at Bing Xin’s own creative activity. It is creation that gives prominence to her power as a translator and writer. As a translator, Bing Xin borrowed Tagore’s way of poetic writing. However, she did not borrow it slavishly, but exhibited her subjectivity in selection and adaptation. Furthermore, she rewrote borrowings into her own creation. Writing reveals the disparity between her and Tagore and displays her powers, her resistance to colonial power and her demonstration of feminist power.

In all, Bing Xin proved herself to be a distinguished May Fourth women writer and translator in interaction with the world. [57]

The ideas in the analysis mentioned above are very clear, which, without doubt, can be seldom found in China’s forum about Bing Xin, and these analyses are made from the world perspective. Reading researches in depth into Bing Xin literature, we can perceive those scholars’ bravery and intelligence in the English speaking world, and they seems to leave us more topics to study and opens up more “Sesame Doors”.

Besides, there are some other ideas in dispute in the papers from the English speaking world. For example, does the maternal image in the literary creation of Bing Xin deconstructs maternal individuality? Does Bing Xin literature fall into Realism or Romanism or Mysticism? Does the religious taste of Bing Xin literature belong to Christianity, or to Buddhism, or to the very popular agapism in the early 20th century? Any way, these ideas have been discussed fully or in detail or in a systematic way; or have been supported with many speaking evidences; or can justify themselves, etc.
On the whole, the study of Bing Xin literature is not a noted school of Modern Chinese literature in the field of sinological studies in the English speaking world. According to incomplete statistics made by authors of this paper, number of the sections, chapters and writings from treatises and works touching upon Bing Xin literature does not reach one hundred, among which there are four doctoral dissertations and ten important works concerned with Bing Xin's works. And some other scholars' sporadic comments and discussions about Bing Xin literature like the famous Swedish scholar Goran Malmqvist, the Czech sinologist Marian Galik and Raoul David Findeisen are not included in the statistics. Though Bing Xin literature is not a noted school, discussion on it continues from one generation to another, running through almost all the research fields of modern Chinese literature in the sinology of the world, which seems to symbolize especially the test of time and the discursive power of its own values. And this reminds us involuntarily of a famous proverb about literature by Schopenhauer: “By contrast, a real work is one that can gain a reputation by the work per se, and therefore, can arouse praise again for the work in different times, just like a very light buoyant object which can float by itself and move on along the long river of time.” [36] The English speaking world is not where the study of Bing Xin is very popular, which brings to us the feeling that “the vague feeling is the basic bass of this stately and sublime mood”. [39]

Notes:
[1] Leo Ou-fan, “Preface”, in Prusek Jaroslav, The Lyrical and the Epic: Studies of Modern Chinese Literature, ed., Leo Ou-fan, trans., Guo Jian-ling (Shanghai: Shanghai Sanlian Bookstore, 2010), 5.
[2] Ibid. In Chapter 3 “The Society for Literary Studies and Others: Ye Shao-jun, Bing Xin, Ling Shu-Hua and Xu Di-shan”.
[3] Besides, Mr Hsia regarded Lu Yin as “a pretty bad writer for short and long fictions”, which not only indicates Mr Hsia’s narrow-mindedness but shows his irreverence to her.
[4] Leo Ou-fan, “Preface”, in Prusek Jaroslav. The Lyrical and the Epic: Studies of Modern Chinese Literature, 53.
[5] Ibid., 56.
[6] Ibid., back-cover.
[7] Ibid., 35.
[8] This long paper by Mr Hsia is in the appendix of “A History of Modern Chinese
Fiction" by Hsia Chih-tseng and in the appendix of "The Lyrical and the Epic: Studies of Modern Chinese Literature" by Prusek.

[9] Leo Ou-fan, "Preface", in Prusek Jaroslav, The Lyrical and the Epic: Studies of Modern Chinese Literature, 2.

[10] Hsia Chih-teing, A History of Modern Chinese Fiction, trans. Liu Shao-ming (Shanghai: Fudan University Press, 2005), 5.

[11] Leo Ou-fan, Leo Ou-fan's Comment on Modern Chinese Literature, ed., Ji Jin (Shanghai: Shanghai Sanlian Bookstore, 2009), 181.

[12] Marian Galik, Bing Xin's Works in Bohemia and Slovakia, and Sinology in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, trans. Li Ling (Beijing: Xue Yuan Press, 2009), 80-90.

[13] Huang Renying, A Study of Modern Chinese Women Writers (Shanghai: Guanghua Press, 1933), 187.

[14] Wei Yanmei, Femininity and Mother-daughter Relationships in Twentieth-century Chinese Literature: Bing Xin, Zhang Jie, Chen Ran, Maxine Hong Kingston, Gish Jen. (State University of New York at Stony Brook, 1999).

[15] Ibid., 34.

[16] Ibid., 43-44.

[17] Wang, Bo, Inventing a Discourse of Resistance: Rhetorical Women in Early Twentieth-century China (Arizona: The University of Arizona, 2005), 142.

[18] Ibid., 137.

[19] Ibid., 139.

[20] Taylor Lieberman Sally, The Mother and Narrative Politics in Modern China (Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 1998), 49-50.

[21] Mao Dun, "On Bing Xin" in Bing Xin, ed. On Writers (Life Bookshop, 1936), 180-181.

[22] Ibid., 202-203.

[23] Tani E. Barlow, Gender Politics in Modern China: Writing and Feminism (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1993).

[24] Philip F. Williams, Asian Literary Voices: From Marginal to Mainstream (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010).

[25] Huang Renying, On the Contemporary Chinese Women Writers (Shanghai: Guanghua Press, 1933), 186.

[26] Ibid., 123-124.

[27] Ibid., 130.

[28] Ibid., 149.
[29] Leo Ou-fan, Leo Ou-fan's Comment on Modern Chinese Literature, ed., Ji Jin (Shanghai: Shanghai Sanlian Bookstore, 2009), 115.

[30] Wang Bo, Inventing a Discourse of Resistance: Rhetorical Women in Early Twentieth-Century China (Arizona: The University of Arizona, 2005), 124, 130.

[31] Ibid., 126, 131.

[32] Ibid., 136.

[33] Liu Xiaoqing, Writing as Translating: Modern Chinese Women's Writing in the Early Twentieth Century (University of South Carolina, Comparative Literature, 2009), 1-2, 50-51.

[34] Marian Galik, Bing Xin's Works in Bohemia and Slovakia, ibid, 85.

[35] Li Zaifu, Introducing Li Zehou's Esthetics (Beijing: Sanlian Bookstore, 2009), 169-170.

[36] Liu Zaifu, "Approaching towards Bing Xin Every Day", Literary Criticism on Chinese Essays, 1 (Chengdu: Bashu Bookstore, 2013).

[37] Liu Xiaoqing, Writing as Translating, 82-84, 88-91.

[38] Schopenhauer’s Esthetics, trans., Wei Qichang (Shanghai: Shanghai's People Press, 2004), 145.

[39] Ibid., 202.

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