

# Translating China into the World: Reimagining and Reconstructing Cross-cultural Encounters and Entanglements Through Fiction, 1600-1900 A.D.

朱雯琪 Linda Wen-Chi Chu

Academia Sinica

Encounters with Europe in premodern China have garnered academic attention in recent decades; (re)discovered sources have been investigated to portray a broad picture of interactions and power dynamics with the West. Yet, much remains to be uncovered. A new trend in historical fiction attempts to fill this lacuna by melding records with imagination. Novelists, inspired by new materials, embark to reconstruct and reimagine early China. One such writer pronounced his effort as “writing the history of Taiwan and writing Taiwan into history.” This bold pronouncement brings to mind the power of fiction to translate and create different, more inclusive versions of history.

Intrigued by the novelist’s declaration, I aim to further my ongoing research on European missionaries to China and survey a new approach. I turn to fiction as a medium that translates, (re)writes, and perhaps even “writes back” to the history of encounters. Employing “translation” in its broadest sense as acts of mediation, I will investigate encounters (in the Deleuzian sense) and their subsequent entanglements that are rendered as fiction through the author’s “translation” of primary resources. My paper takes fiction as new grounds to reimagine the stage, dancers, choreography, and entangled state therein of the ballet that is 17<sup>th</sup>-century Dutch Formosa and 19<sup>th</sup>-century Missionary China as case studies. I hope to leverage the dialectic power of encounter and the power of historical fiction to offer a new approach to studying premodern China that involves translation in the making of literary China as well as China itself as a “translation” made possible through continuous encounters with the world.